

BEYOND THE CULTURE CITY RIP OFF

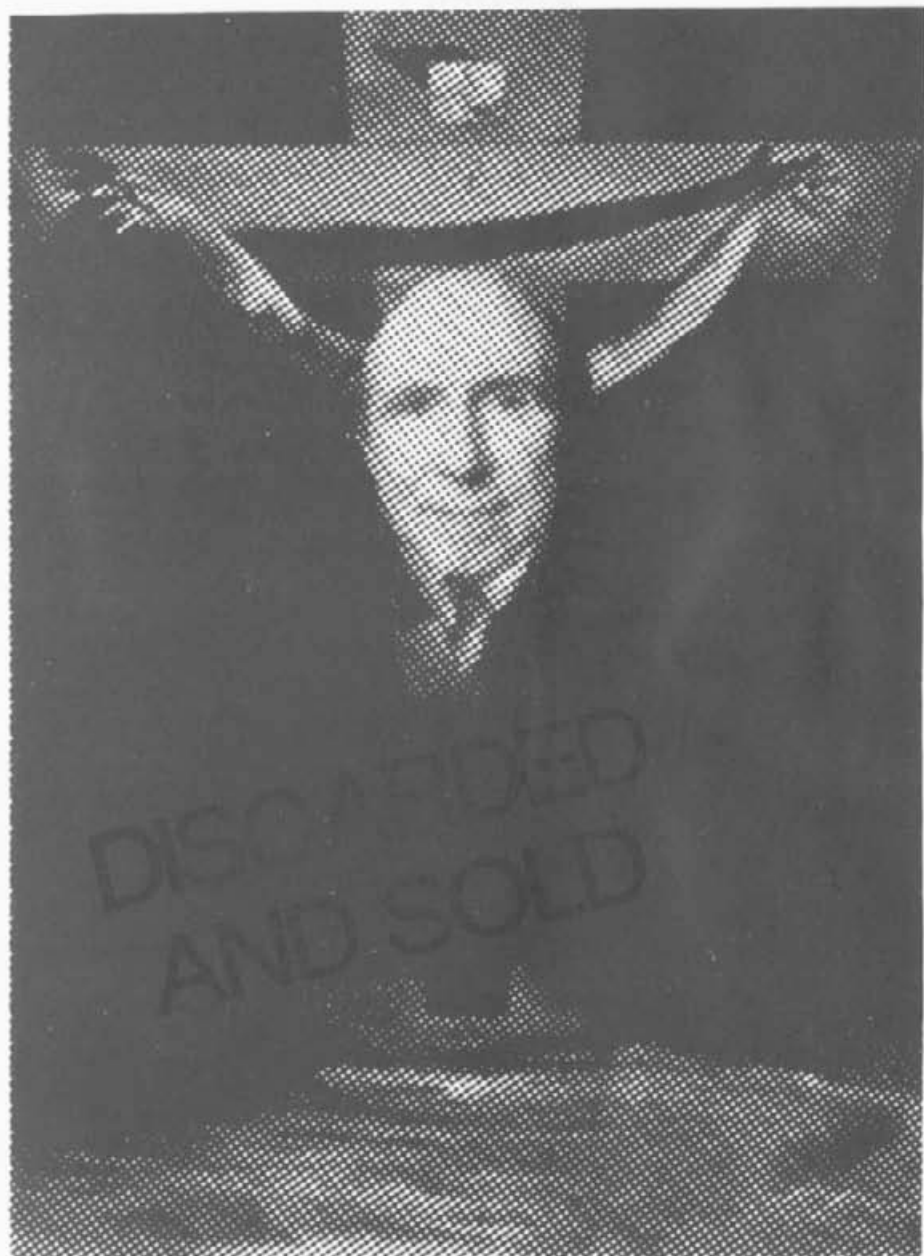
THE RECKONING

PUBLIC LOSS PRIVATE GAIN



Edited By Farquhar McLay

WORKERS
CITY



Salvador Lally: Ascending to Heaven

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PREFACE *by Farquhar McLay*

In the din and dirt of McNeil's forge in Scotland Street, Kinning Park, I used to hear old-timers say things like "The working man ay cuts his ain throat", or sometimes, a bit more prosaically, "The working man is his ain worst enemy". It was an everyday refrain and I never heard anybody querying it. In 1951, as a 15-year old trying to make sense of the horrible world of industry, I didn't query it either. In my innocence I thought they were talking about the fact that every day of our lives we hurried to get in that gate, to sweat our guts out from 8 till 5-30 between Monday and Friday and from 8 till noon on a Saturday, with the coveted two nights and a Sunday to fill out the pay poke. I could easily understand why the working man would be suicidal. He was trapped in a nightmare. The foundry was practically his whole life except when he slept. Of course they were probably talking about something else. They were probably talking about betrayal. A dream that turned sour.

It was an old story even forty years ago. With high hopes the Clydeside Reds had gone off to Westminster only to sink dismally in that 'treacherous bog'. To be precise, it was the hopes that sank rather than the men. The men did quite well for themselves once they had jettisoned, for all practical purposes, the people's cause. On the whole they turned out to be men of small principle and less conscience. One hears that some even purred when Churchill cracked jokes at their expense. There was chronic amnesia as well. At the end of a long and lucrative parliamentary career during which, among other things, he became Financial Secretary to the War Office (1929-30), Minister of Fuel and Power (1945-47) and Secretary of State for War (1947-50), Manny Shinwell could say: "I was always a red-hot iconoclast, and I still am." He said that on the floor of the House of Lords.

As radicals, Shinwell and Gallacher and McGovern had started off with the anti-parliamentarians. For parliamentary action had been repudiated overwhelmingly by the greater part of the working-class movement long before the Red Clyde period. The First International had foreseen the danger of the movement being absorbed and neutralised in the capitalist state machine. The idea that real socialism could be achieved through parliament was the antithesis of what the movement stood for. In the words of William Morris, writing in the 1880s: "It is widely understood that parliamentary success can only be won at the expense of abandoning real

socialism in favour of mere palliatives." Prior to 1921 the rejection of parliament was the common ground on which the various left-wing groupings in the revolutionary movement stood.

But following the Bolshevik counter-revolution in Russia and the parliamentary 'party of a new type' doctrine promulgated by Lenin in *Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, the situation changed. Too few people had any idea of the realities behind Bolshevik domination: all they knew was that the dreamed-of revolution had happened and Lenin was at its head and the Bolsheviks, 'thir convalescence oot', would soon be putting the ideas of Marx and Engels ('the state will wither away') into practice. Clearly if anybody knew what should be done it must be Lenin.

If Lenin said it was imperative to work within the parliamentary system, even if this was contrary to all previous experience in developing the working-class movement, then people should forget their previous experience and set up a party of iron discipline, highly centralised and authoritarian, strictly hierarchical and organised around a small, hard core who would be the 'vanguard of the proletariat'.

It was this kind of advice (as well as Comintern directives to the same effect) that led to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920. Others from the working-class movement, obeying Comintern orders, went off in search of careers in the Labour party. Left-wing politics was easily assimilated by the power system and quickly legitimised: much safer in the talking-shop than in the workshop. And gradually, with parliament now the be-all and end-all of leftist strategies, and with the rank-and-file dynamic of direct industrial action and free debate stilled in the interests of these strategies and the 'party line', the creation of a socialist society ceased to be on the agenda, a truce was called in the class war, and the only thing exercising the minds of the 'vanguard of the proletariat' was how to reduce the revolutionary movement to brain-dead, ballotbox passivity.

All they succeeded in doing, however, was sowing working-class disillusionment and apathy to the point where Arthur Greenwood, Lord Privy Seal in the Attlee government, could rejoice that his Labour colleagues were now "landlords, capitalists and lawyers". Betrayal was now called by a prettier name. The working-class traitor was now a 'realist' with a peerage and a bank-account to prove it.

By 1951 and my baptism in the world of work, it was the working-class movement, sapped of all its earlier revolutionary self-confidence, that had withered away'. Although the Labour and trade union leadership could still make noises in a language borrowed from the revolutionary tradition, what was once a genuine aspiration had now degenerated into empty rhetoric in the mouths of people who were not so much seeking the liberation of the working class, as life-long security for themselves in their dominant role as 'responsible' mediators between the capitalist bureauc-

racy and the people.

The movement's primary dynamic - the ideal of a classless, co-operative, voluntarily organised, communalist society - was smothered and forgotten in the sham 'struggle' waged in parliament and in industrial disputes which the trade unions, tied to the Labour Party and with vast sums invested in the capitalist system, would inevitably betray.

The working class did indeed 'cut thir ain throat' insofar as, bit by bit, through parliament and the trades unions, they surrendered the movement to representatives over whom they would never have any real control. As far as the unions go, the classic example is the General Strike of 1926. The TUC, although never in favour of the strike, led it in order to keep it in the hands of 'responsible Executives' who would, at the first opportunity, force a 'settlement' on the workers. In fact it was total and abject capitulation covered over with a few airy phrases about 'guarantees' to disguise the bitter reality of defeat. This the workers discovered when they returned to their places of employment only to find widespread victimisation, massive wage reductions and outright dismissals with no appeal.

If the trade union movement is now in retreat, it is not because the workers have at last seen through the treachery of leaders who worry more about financial assets than working-class liberation: it is only because, as a direct result of long-standing trade union betrayal coupled with the advance of capitalist-controlled computer technologies, the workers themselves are in retreat and the boss class has less need of trade unions to facilitate the implementation of boardroom decisions.

In the era of post-industrial capitalism which is slowly beginning to envelop us, the worker in manufacturing industry is no longer at centre stage. While the manufacturing workforce grows ever smaller, output stays steady or can easily be increased as computerised production advances. On Clydeside the service sector - tourism and leisure, financial services, commerce, transport, etc - now employs about 70% of people in work. It would seem that whatever potential the manufacturing worker once had to overthrow the capitalist system is now greatly diminished. It is a sad fact certainly that that potential was seldom put to use except in pursuit of delusory wage claims. As long as the trades unions were only haggling over sums of money in the pay poke, they were in effect collaborating with the employing class. They had people's labour to sell and they had come to market to sell it. They were thinking the same thoughts and talking the same language as the capitalists. The uses to which the labour would be put had no place in the discussions. Would the manufactured commodity enhance or degrade life? Would the working class be able to afford it? Would it be good for people or bad? Nobody cared.

And naturally of course the wages system itself was never questioned. Was it right that people's labour should be just another commodity to be

bought and sold in the market place? That a person's chances in life should be determined by the market value of his labour? That certain people's labour should have a higher value than that of others. That some people's labour should have no pay entitlement whatever.

That dog-eat-dog competition should be the rule in the labour market, creating privileged elites at the expense of the excluded majority?

These questions were never asked by the trades unions in the past - at least not since monopoly capitalism and the State made the TUC a partner in the attempt to make capitalist domination proof against the strike weapon. They are not being asked today.

While the wages system remains intact all the authoritarian relationships proceeding therefrom will continue to thrive throughout the whole of society, in every job and profession, and the only political change possible will be the displacement of one power elite in favour of another no less rapacious elite.

I doubt whether the work-day in McNeil's forge forty years ago had undergone much radical change in the previous twenty or thirty years. Today the computer revolution has transformed the industrial scene almost overnight, and it has hardly yet begun. The old jobs are vanishing. Nostalgia for these outmoded forms of production - now a marketable commodity in art and theatre - is surely misplaced. It was hard, miserable toil in deplorable conditions. People forget the crude anti-Catholic discrimination operated by management and foremen which kept workers at each other's throats; as well as the callous indifference which led to an accident rate which is hardly credible today. Ships were built on the Clyde because labour was cheap on the Clyde and the people in work were for the most part too cowed and too terrified of unemployment to make any real trouble.

But today so many proles are out of work with little hope of ever working again. When jobs in heavy industry go, they go forever. The capitalist-led cybernetics revolution has seen to that. It is no longer just a case of temporary unemployment while capitalism rides out another 'crisis'. The major readjustment has been made. New investment is now in technology and science. Where a plant is fully automated, a small group of technicians can carry out the whole productive process from beginning to end without any help from 'workers'. The traditional image of the 'worker' as 'producer of wealth' gets more problematic every day. We are now moving towards permanent non-employment of 'workers' on a massive scale.

The workerist and productivist notions we were brought up on - having pride in our role as indispensable (although cruelly exploited) units of production, taking our identity from the job we did and suffering a terrible kind of shameful death with its loss - these are now much weakened, if not yet completely obsolete. People may still feel shame when out of work, but capitalism no longer demands it. Today identity depends not so much on

the work one does as on the commodities it enables an individual to consume. In our desocialised population, the work ethic - the old nightmare of self-hate, duty, renunciation which kept the industrial wheels turning has been abolished in favour of commodity consumption as the strict form of economic/political arm-twisting. Work has been degraded to the point where it is totally devoid of any meaning outside the consumer values of capitalism.

Capitalism spreads its poison throughout the whole of society by means of the official culture which is itself permeated by an ideology of domination. To varying degrees this ideology contaminates us all. It ends in psychological as well as economic domination. It is hard to escape it. Much of the traditional socialist critique was - and still is - imbued with it, which in practice led only to the replacement of one band of oppressors by another, with no appreciable benefit to the mass of the population.

Yet in the de-industrialised world of the 1990s, with the control of the new technologies firmly in the hands of capital, with the prole's social identity fast disappearing, and with countless millions condemned to lead useless lives on a pittance of dole money, easing their day with drugs and television - who would dare forecast social peace and tranquillity? Ten years ago the riots in the ghettos of Toxteth and Brixton - short-lived and ill-directed though these protests were - showed that people's needs run far deeper than pills and television and the parliamentary charade can ever satisfy.

It is among the millions of unemployed today, and the countless more of the future as the pitiless advance of automation and computerisation plays havoc with people's lives, that the revolution must surely have its roots.

It will be a negation of the official culture of power and domination. It will be based on individuals and small groups coming together to forge a libertarian cultural movement for themselves out of a simple hunger to bring a measure of depth and meaning into their lives.

They will be working on the principle of the socialist ideal: a classless, co-operative, voluntarily organised society, and drawing on the spiritual and moral values embodied in that ideal. From the commune and the co-operative it will flow out through the whole of society.

Only when we turn away from the culture of power will the will to power begin to fade, and the socialist dream become a living reality.

INTRODUCTION *by Farquhar McLay*

"Dispatches from the front-line by a cultural citizen's militia," was how one reviewer described the anthology *Workers City* when it came out in 1988. It was a good description, apt for the book but also prophetic. For it might just as easily have been a commentary on the aims and activities of the Workers City Group during 1990, where the battle is being fought for the soul of this great city. Here, in *The Reckoning*, we continue with the 'dispatches'.

The Workers City Group is not a political party. We do not have the financial resources available to our opponents. We do not, in Hugh Savage's words, try to force our ideas down anyone's throat. We argue. And when we have argued things out we try to place our point before the public. Naturally among ourselves we disagree in regard to many things. But one thing upon which we are all agreed is this: the city belongs to its people and not to the political gangsters and the big-money men whose only interest in Glasgow is what they can milk it for.

Although in 1990 our attack has been, in the main, on the cultural front, the political repercussions have come as no surprise: for of course, as I have said elsewhere, the great Year of Culture had more to do with power politics than culture: more to do with millionaire developers than art.

We may lack many things but I do not think anyone could question our courage. We are afraid of no one - however hard the powers that be may try to intimidate and silence us. The Workers City Group points towards the future. It is of groups like ours the future shall be made. We have nothing to apologise for.

But people ask: What have you achieved?

Well, for one thing we opened up and sustained a debate on 1990 which the Labour Council, the Festivals Unit, the property speculators and entrepreneurs could well have done without. By any honest and objective standard, they lost the argument, especially when you take into account the financial as well as cultural disaster of Glasgow's Glasgow and Lally's forced climbdown on the sale of Flesher's Haugh.

And secondly - along with friendly members of the press to whom we are pleased here to acknowledge our gratitude - we made certain that the unjust treatment of Elspeth King and Michael Donnelly got onto the front page, and the despicable manoeuvrings of Lally, Spalding, etc., got full public exposure.

This is no mean feat when you consider that we have a council and bureaucracy - District and Regional - which like to work in secret without the hindrance of public debate and consultation, and have been uninterrupted in this Stalinist mode for near on forty years.

We have still a very a long way to go and much more to do. But they are the dinosaurs, cultural and political. Our time is yet to come.

John Taylor Caldwell

Childhood Years

Excerpted from Parts I and II of The Stars are Setting the manuscript autobiography of John Taylor Caldwell.

My father was a dynamic little man of five feet three inches, with brisk army-officer movements, and a sharp, clipped voice to match, and a ginger moustache twirled and waxed at the ends. He held, whenever possible, a pipe between his teeth, and was surrounded by an aroma of thick black tobacco and whisky.

Whisky, work and women were his elements. He had married my mother because he needed sex, and children were an unavoidable consequence. He seldom spoke to any of us. We were objects to be tolerated, not cultivated.

My parents came from Blantyre in Lanarkshire. My father was John Taylor Caldwell, born in 1876, one of a family of four boys and two girls. He left school at eleven years to follow his father's trade as a tailor. My mother was the only child of William Browning, labourer. She was born in 1877. When she met, and married, my father in 1902, she was working as a salesgirl in the drapery department of the Burnbank Co-op.

That same year they moved to Cramond Street in Glasgow, where, in 1905 sister Nan arrived, followed by Bill in 1908. They had moved to Summerfield Cottages when I poked forth my head and six-pound body on the 14th of July 1911, to join my fellow humans for a little while - eighty years, so far.

In the early part of 1915 my father obtained a job in Belfast and left us. We followed on the 1st of April that year.

Belfast was at that time a trim little city of a quarter of a million inhabitants. There were no tenement blocks, and high-rise flats had not been thought of. It was surrounded by green fields, unspoiled by ribbon development. From the city centre the hills could (and can) be seen. Immediately outside the city were the mansions of the gentry, at the end of long driveways, guarded by iron gates.

Nearer the town were fine villas, and semi-detached houses. Down the social scale, but still with the middle-class, were spacious Victorian terraces. Then we come to the lesser terraces, in the city itself, cheek by jowl with the cobbled side-streets of the labouring classes. We lived in a lesser terrace because our father was a master tailor, with his own little factory

of six treadle machines and a fitting room, high above Royal Avenue.

We lived in Mountpottinger Road, in Alfred terrace, which had the police station at one end and the tram depot at the other, with the Picturedrome just beyond. We were specially careful of our respectability in the lesser terraces because, as in our case, only the tramlines, and a sliver of good fortune, separated us from the cobbled domains of the lower orders.

Terraced houses were "parlour houses", because they had a parlour, and houses in the cobbled streets were "kitchen houses" because they didn't have a parlour. Sometimes hens pecked and cocks crowed in the cobbled side-streets, because the residents were only a generation away from the peasant countryside. The children in the cobbled streets went barefoot.

These side-streets were usually like village communities, from which the older residents may have come. Unlocked doors in daytime, visiting neighbours entering after a formal "Are yis in?" The barefoot boys were regarded as unfit company by the parents in the terraced parlour houses. We were warned not to mix with them, or to take off our boots lest we be mistaken for them. Class distinction was an ingrained tradition. It was a scandalous matter if a young tradesman took to wife the daughter of a labourer - as my father had done - and had so "married beneath him".

I was seven years of age when frightening things happening in a far-off country caused me to ask: "Mama, who are the Bolsheviks?" My mother paused in her ironing and gave the question thoughtful consideration. "The Bolsheviks? They're worse than the Catholics!" she replied.

I used to lie in bed listening to the gun-fire echoing across the rooftops. My big brother, Bill, who was eleven, and knew everything, could tell which was the crack of a rifle, and which was the report of a revolver, and what was the rattle of a machine-gun. Occasionally a louder noise drowned out all the rest. "That was a mills bomb", Bill explained quite calmly.

Sometimes we got out of bed and raised the skylight. In summer the view was, to my young mind, sadly beautiful. Beyond the grey-slatted rooftops lay the alluring cave hill with a hundred red winking eyes, as the sun-ignited whin bushes blazed in deep violet shadows and sent blue drifting smoke columns across the lough. But on moonless nights the hill vanished and left only the fires to dance with the stars.

On these nights when guns rattled and searchlights combed the rooftops for snipers the red glows were not of whin bushes set on fire by the sun, but the little houses of Belfast people, set on fire by their neighbours, in that frenzy of hatred which only religion can inspire. A glow of greater magnitude would be a factory. And where the yellow flames danced madly - "That is a pub", said my brother who knew everything.

After such a night the morning papers would report that two people had been killed and six injured, in the previous night's battle. I was disappointed that so much noise had drawn so little blood. Bill was not a bit

surprised. "It took a million bullets to kill one man in the war", he explained. I wondered if I had heard two million shots before I fell asleep in a sudden silence. I asked my mother why we had no riots in our street. "Because we are respectable people", she replied.

There was no doubt about that. We lived in a "parlour" house. It had a garden the size of a hearth-rug at the front, which grew nasturtiums in red and orange, and from whence the ivy climbed around the door and up the brickwork to the parlour window. We had an iron gate, and iron railings. We dressed like respectable people. We had steel protectors on our boots to keep them from wearing out sooner than otherwise. And when our stockings had been darned till there was no sock to hold darn, we had them refooted at a little shop that sold everything from candles to gas mantles, and mangled clothes and refooted socks as well.

"Don't let me catch you running around in your bare feet," our mother frequently said, suspecting the worst, as we set out on our boyish ploys during the summer holidays from school. We put her mind at rest, we wouldn't let her catch us. Often we went to Ormeau Park, and waited till we arrived there before we removed our boots, and tying them by their laces, slung them over our shoulders.

On those hot days we envied the boys from the back streets who always went bare-footed, even to school. We kept clear of them, because they did not respect our respectability, and would have set about us, getting us down and sitting on our chest just for the fun of it. In winter these boys stood at street corners in little groups, one foot resting on top of the other interchangeably in alternate nursing against the cold, their hot breath steaming; their noses damp. They all wore over-size bunnets with the skip at the back.

But the communal spirit was also strong, particularly in religion. The highlight of this unity was reached in the first days of July, leading up to the 12th, which was the anniversary of the battle of the Boyne which took place in 1690, when King William the Protestant, beat King James the Catholic. Not that anybody knew much about the event, except what it said in the old song: "King Billy slew the Papish crew at the Battle o' Bine Waater." The celebration was allowed to lapse while the young men were away fighting the Hun, but now that was over they could get back to normal.

The position before the war was that the Protestants had raised an army of 90,000 men to fight both the British and the Irish rather than submit to becoming part of Catholic Ireland; and the Irish Catholics had raised an army of Volunteers to defeat the Northern Protestants and make Ireland one State. In this they would have been fighting alongside the English, for the Liberal Government was in favour of a united Ireland under a Devolved Government (i.e. Home Rule). But an important section of British Army officers threatened to resign rather than fight alongside the

Irish Nationalists against the Ulster Loyalists.

Now the situation was that the moderate Home-Rulers had gone; swept aside by the events of the Easter uprising in 1916. The new power was the Sinn Fein, who would have nothing less than complete independence - for all Ireland. The name was new. We Protestants continued to call them Fenians - who had been active in Victorian times.

Leading up to the 12th there were frantic preparations for the celebrations; the Orange Walk, and the all-night bonfire as highlights of excitement. The stylised mural of King Billy crossing the Boyne on a white charger with sword upraised which was featured on any suitable gable end at the top of a side street was touched up. A great deal of work went into erecting an arch across the street in replica of the Gates of Derry, which had withstood the siege by King James' Papish crew in 1689. The women, their shawls and hair dangling in front, would stoop to paint each alternate kerbstone red, white, or blue.

There would be no arch across our respectable road, and no bonfire. But there would be plenty of bowler hats in the parade; so many that the bowler hat was becoming part of the dress of the officials of the Order on parade, with, of course, an orange sash.

My father was indifferent to all this carry on. He couldn't care less who had won the Battle of the Boyne, as long as the pubs stayed open, and sex was available. There wasn't much more to life than that; though sometimes in the dim past he had been a Mason. Then economic disaster struck us. The firm which my father supplied with ready-made suits was boycotted by order of the Sinn Fein, with promise of a bullet in the head for those who did not comply. So my father's little two-roomed factory, high above Royal Avenue, with its six foot-treadled sewing machines, had to close, and we had to sell our parlour furniture to survive. When the rent of our house rose to twenty-five shillings a week, including rates, we had to move.

We moved into a side street off Ormeau Road. The house, which cost six-and-eightpence a week had a tiny parlour, kitchen and two tiny bedrooms. It was not quite cap, muffler, black shawl, and bare feet territory, but was very near it.

Almost the first callers at our new house were a group of young men (in cap and muffler) who were sure we were anxious to contribute something to the cost of the arch, and firewood for the bonfire. They were sure my father would like to join the Orange Order, and take part in the Procession, they were somewhat amazed that he had lived so long without doing so before. They accepted a shilling as token of good intention, and my father became an Orangeman, and with bowler hat and orange sash marched in the next Procession the thirty footsore miles to Finachy. And Bill, Harry and I cheered him from the kerbside - in our bare feet.

Now that we were not so respectable, and lived largely on second-day

loaves and fourpence a pound margarine we could gather with other urchins at the street corner and batter old cans with a wooden baton and sing rousing anti-papist songs; One was "Dolly's Braes", but I've forgotten the words. The one I remember went like this:

*"Did yis hear about the riots
That started in July
When the fenians from the shipyards
For their lives they had to fly?"*

There were still a few Fenians living in one of the kitchen houses in a cobbled side street. They had moved in during the war years when Catholics and Protestants had forgotten their differences to fight the Hun. Now the differences had to be remembered, and the Fenians had to be rooted out.

The word Fenian was used offensively. It was obsolete. The bold Fenian men belonged to a past generation. It was now the Sinn Fein and their active wing, the I.R.A.

The rooting out of the Fenians was an occasion of excitement for the unemployed young men, defenders to the death of good old King Billy, and the Proddy children.

"They're throwing out the papists", cried brother Bill, galloping off to see the fun, invisible reins in one hand and a rump-smacking invisible whip in the other. We all pretended to be Tom Mix in those days. I trotted beside him in the direction of the milling crowd. It was my first involvement in social violence. From the centre of the crowd came a scream. My heart raced; blood pounded in my brain. I hate violence... "What are they doing?" I asked anyone who cared to listen. An old fellow, leaning leisurely against the gable end removed his pipe and said with comfortable assurance: "Ah, sure, an' they're only givin him a batin".

The excited urchins which I had joined saw a pile of furniture in the centre of the cobbles, and went racing to help in the noble work, belatedly, for the house had been cleared and piled into even to my childhood eyes, a pathetically small heap: a well scrubbed kitchen table, a few wooden chairs, a chest of drawers, a sideboard, handed down from past generations. On top was the bedding. The non-combustibles, pots, dishes, iron bed-frames, littered the street among the cobbles.

Outside the gutted house, against the sill and the smashed window stood five mortals in inexpressible misery and distress. A beshawled woman, anger blazing from her eyes, though she wept helplessly; beside her her half-grown daughter, bedraggled and ugly in the rags of poverty, weeping her heart out; beside them stood three little boys, tousle-headed, bare-footed, all tears and snorter. These were the dirty Fenians. They watched their worldly possessions gathered for the flames, and heard their hus-

band and father scream, and there was nothing they could do but weep.

Nobody seemed anxious to set the gathered fuel alight; there was no sense of direction or organisation. Everybody was milling around, expecting something to happen, but not making it happen. I knew in my heart what caused the delay. They were all secretly ashamed, but dared not show it. Who could feel sorry for papists? They were burning out decent protestants, and had committed dreadful atrocities in the past. Yet that ignored little group by the window impressed itself on every adult brain. They had lived together; the men had boozed together, the women had gossiped together, the children had played together. They were in the grip of some force beyond themselves. It was the herd instinct; the force not of reason but of tribal custom. The word had gone out that this was the thing to do. Everybody was doing it. Then, once in motion it gathered its own reasons; atrocity built on atrocity. Unreason gave birth to reason.

A suspense, a hiatus, then a youth with scantily furnished mind, poured paraffin over the heap and set it alight. That changed the mood, for fire and blood are potent stimulants. The weeping figures were forgotten in the sense of invigorated life and power that destruction and cruelty give. I have not forgotten them, they haunt my memory still, not with a sense of life and power, but of shame and despair.

I departed from Belfast at nine o'clock on a Saturday evening in early April 1925. Nan, who was married, and living in Greencastle, then a Belfast suburb, and my stepmother, always called Cissie, came to see me off at Belfast quay... I had made a sea voyage before; from Stranraer to Larne in 1915 when we had come to Belfast, but of that I had only infant memories. Now, a highly sensitive lad of 13, I was making my first break from home, going on a voyage on a big ship (really an old sea-beaten cattle-boat called the "Magpie"). I was thrilled and frightened as we cast off and headed out into the lough, and the open sea, to the unknown.

Cissie had asked a man, travelling with a little girl to, "look after" me. He agreed, but it required little attention from him. His daughter, called Moira - a lovely name thought I - aged about twelve and I became acquainted. We leaned on the ship's rail and talked together for a while then we had a vigorous game of tag around the capstans and ventilators. As it grew dark her father took Moira down below to the steerage saloon. He suggested that I go too, but I said that I wanted to stay on deck all night and "see the dawn come up". He smiled at that, and let me stay.

When a pantry boy came around with a tray-load of mugs of tea at twopence, and thick cornedbeef sandwiches at fourpence I went below to ease my hunger and spend my sixpence. The steerage saloon was on the cattle deck. There was cattle smell around it and the lowing of the poor beasts, tethered in the stalls behind it. The saloon was furnished with benches broad enough to lie on as wooden bunks, if the number of passengers allowed. I ate my sandwich beside Moira, then went back to the

deck. I did not want to miss anything of this great experience.

All night I crouched on the deck day-dreaming deep dreams and thinking brand new dazzling thoughts. I was not alone on the spray-damp deck; several other passengers preferred the open to the atmosphere of the saloon. It was a calm night, the sea breaking leisurely in little froth-crested wavelets, and turning from pewter to silver in the light of the stars. For a while - a long time it seemed to me - we swayed gently in open water as the old tub nosed herself forward against a soft breeze, then land appeared, dark hills approaching from the horizon. Soon we had coastline on the starboard side (yes, I knew about starboard, larboard and port, I had read "Treasure Island"), looming dark in the morning twilight. Occasionally there was a duster of pin-pricks of light from gas-lit towns. There were no great illuminations of electrically-lit cities, and no long yellow ribbons of motorways, just dark and silent, sleeping till the dawn, and yawning to life as the sun rose.

As the light strengthened and revealed the scenery I was numbed by its awesome beauty. Not because it rates highly as Scottish scenery, but because I had never seen a landscape before; only the city-scape of slate-roofed houses and chimney stacks. All day long after that voyage when I shut my eyes I saw the passing panorama of wooded hills and green fields, and felt the swaying of the "Magpie". At night I dreamed of them.

By the time we reached Ailsa Craig it was light; most of the passengers were on deck and a goodly portion of them exclaiming: "Ailsa Craig - Paddy's Milestone." Moira was up and she and I had a most rollicking time chasing each other round the deck. I never enjoyed a game so much. With other boys I was treated as small-fry; with Moira we were equals.

Presently the boat berthed at Merklans wharf to unload the cattle. I felt sorry for the poor beasts, whacked down the slippery gangway to be driven to the slaughter-house. Was this their purpose in life? Did they feel it? Did they know it? A little way further up the Clyde, and we docked at the Broomielaw.

My father was waiting. So early in the morning, but already well lubricated. He thanked the man in charge of me profusely, implying that while he was gratified, the man was honoured. "You have looked after MY SON," he said and repeated it several times to let the significance of the honour and the gratitude sink in. The man expressed himself: "Only too pleased to have been of help", and turned away. My father - the Old Man as Bill had named him - accosted an ancient cabby who had a sorry old horse between the shafts of a well-scuffed carriage. They haggled over the cost of our transport to Collins Street, Townhead. The cabby, possibly a refugee from a coloured illustration of a Dicken's book, tried his luck at four shillings, the Old Man cut him down to half-a-crown and a pint. My only luggage was a paper bag with my other shirt and pair of socks, for I did not boast the luxury of underwear in those days, and toothbrushes

were used only by well-off people.

I was not as thrilled as I might have been in setting out to find my first full-time employment. Work was not a new experience. I had been working in a grocer's shop, run by a bad-tempered brother and sister partnership since I was eleven. I did two hours, from eight to ten in the morning, not getting to school till nearly eleven, and from half-past three till seven. Of course this seriously disrupted my school work and often got me into trouble. Deeper and more lasting was the damage this did to my mental development... I could not be myself under this imposition of servitude. I had to constantly push aside my thoughts. I lived in a hiatus.

When I wasn't carrying a large delivery basket I was pushing a truck with several baskets; and when I wasn't so engaged I was out in the back yard breaking wooden boxes into firewood which sold in the shop at two bundles a penny. On Saturday I worked from eight in the morning till ten at night, with a two-hour break in the afternoon. My weekly wage was four shillings. Brother Bill worked in the same shop, full time, same kind of work, for nine shillings.

After some weeks I was interviewed and accepted for a job as pageboy in the about-to-be-opened Picture House in Sauchiehall Street, on the site where the Savoy Shopping Centre is now located. Before and during the First War there had been a favourite tearoom here, in a city noted for its tearooms. I don't recall what it was called. It was specially preferred by the shopping ladies because it had a cool fountain and was lush with potted palms. As an attractive annexe it had a moving-picture hall, where one could spend a pleasant afternoon or evening being entertained by this comparatively recent innovation. Probably many of the older generation would have agreed with my father who said (when he heard that I was going to work in such a place) "It's just a fad. I've seen them come and go. For a while it was roller-skating".

But the fad had taken on. After the war the cinema had become a major industry. The Provincial Cinematographic Theatres Company Limited bought the tearoom site and converted it into the city's greatest cinema, with marble entrance hall, marble pillars, marble tiles, marble staircase, with marble central baulstrade, ending in marble newal post against which - it was exactly my size - I stood as an added ornamental attraction together with the half-dozen potted palms - restricted by fire regulations. The tea-room was demoted to a cafe, situated upstairs, with a ladies' six piece orchestra as an attraction - or distraction.

The Picture House opened on the 10th August 1925, at 1.45 and was quite a sensational event. Queues formed an hour or so before, stretching as far as Cambridge Street for the Circle; and to Hope Street for the stalls. The prices were eightpence and a shilling for the Stalls till 4 o'clock, then one shilling, and one-and-sixpence. For the Circle the matinee price was

one and six, and the evening price two shillings. There was always a double feature bill. An off-duty policeman stood at the head of each outdoor queue and received £1 and a glass of whisky when the queue had dissolved.

I started work at nine and polished door handles and hinges till eleven, then had an hour-and-a-half off, reporting at 12.30 in my uniform to take up my place against the marble column till ten at night with an hour off for tea (half an hour on Saturday). I was decked out in blue uniform, narrow-waisted, brass-buttoned white gloves under golden shoulder epaulettes, big red-banded forge cap with Company initials golden-stamped on the front - P.C.T.

Here are some statistical details for the social historian. The manager, I think, received £10 a week, the under-manager £7. It may be that the under-manager received more, he was always an Englishman, and more authoritative than the manager. It may be that the directors of the PCT did not think a Scotsman capable of managing anything so sophisticated as a picture house. There was also an English circuit manager who kept an eye on things. There were a Chief Operator, two assistants, and a spool boy. I don't know their wages. There were two orchestras, one of twelve pieces for the evening performances, and one of six pieces for the matinee. When the cinema organ was installed a year or so later, the smaller orchestra was dismissed. When talkies came the bigger orchestra was also dismissed. The number of fine kerbside musicians increased...

It was said in the staff-room that the conductor of these orchestras, Harry Rosenberg, was paid sixteen pounds a week.

Coming to the lower ranks I can speak with more confidence. The foreman received £3.10 shillings. The two doormen £3.5 shillings, four ticket collectors £1.10 shillings. The pageboys (at first only me, but as winter approached two more, to open and shut the doors) 10 shillings (50p). Two cash girls, eight usherettes, starting at 12.30, 18 shillings. A chocolate-selling girl and an ice-cream-selling boy, 10 shillings plus commission. Discipline was strict. Usherettes who wore light-coloured stockings, showing up in the dark, would be sacked on the spot, and one was. There were six cleaners who swept and scrubbed from six till nine for 15 shillings a week. I don't know what the ancient night watchman received. There was no overtime for Trade shows or Sunday work.

We stayed in Collins Street, Townhead, till the end of August, then we moved to South Portland Street, in the Gorbals. We left a small furnished house and took over a large unfurnished one; and we had no furniture. It was still in Belfast because we could not pay for its transport to Glasgow. Eventually the Old Man went over to Belfast to retrieve it, but on arriving there and discovering how much he owed for storage decided just to sell it. He may have thought that it was more sensible to bring back the money and buy furniture in Glasgow, but he had, being in Belfast, to get in touch with old drinking companions, and to impress them with how well he was

doing in Glasgow, splashed the money around till there was none left, and he returned penniless.

So we had a house and no furniture. It was the resourceful Cissie who supplied the solution. With some innate sense for such discoveries she found the "Barrows" - or "Barras", as they were colloquially called, and there bought two straw mattresses and a table, some crockery and cutlery. The Old Man had a job as bespoke tailors' cutter in the Co-op, so there was a wage coming in - and my 50p. But it took a long time and several visits to the "Barras" and to Paddy's Market before we were settled.

Number 92 was a big house, five rooms and a kitchen, no hot water or bathroom, and in a bad state of disrepair. That is why we obtained it on a cheap rental. It was my first time living in a house with electric light, and that of amazingly primitive installation. The kitchen lights - there were two of them, were supplied by exposed red twisted flex stretched across the ceiling, covered in a fur of grease - congealed dust. There was no bathroom and only a cubby-hole lavatory where the electric flex did not reach.

In the kitchen were the coal bunker, the sink, and a big black-leaded grate, with a chimney as wide as itself, but which evidently had little attraction for the smoke which rose from the cheap sultry coal, for it preferred to drift beyond the draught-board and rise to the ceiling, enshrouding the 60 watt electric bulb, like a pale little moon in a cloudy sky. Every two months or so Cissie would gather a bundle of newspaper, soak it in paraffin and with the sweeping brush poke it up the chimney, then set it alight. As it roared furiously into flame, setting the chimney afire and sending down a shower of red-hot clumps of soot, Cissie would stand back and exclaim admiringly "Sure now an' that's a queer bleeze." From the window we could see the black smoke sweeping down along the street, engulfing the playing children who looked up excitedly at the plume of dancing yellow flame emerging from the chimney, doubtless hoping they might see the house go on fire. There was a fine of five shillings if the arsonist was caught by the police, but Cissie claimed to know when the policeman was about to go off duty. That was the accepted time for setting chimneys alight, as most housewives knew. The bobby would not delay his departure to make investigations.

Cissie came from Londonderry, of farm labouring stock, she had gone to Belfast in 1914 to find work, and had met and been seduced by my father, who, since she was an innocent illiterate Catholic girl he had to marry before he could have his wicked way with her. They married bigamously (she in good faith), set up house and had a child on the way before my mother and family arrived from Dumfries. My mother never got to know of this, though when the deception was uncovered without my mother's knowledge, there was a mighty row in which Cissie's large labouring brothers promised to make mincemeat fit for a dog out of my little father. How my father got out of this I do not know. It did not curb his natural

instincts. He soon had two other ladies on his bow. When my mother died he married another lady, this time of Protestant peasant stock, but it did not last long and he sent for Cissie, not revealing the recent matrimonial digression. She, having overcome the shame of her betrayal by this time, left her little daughter with her brothers and came to him, whom she ignorantly thought was her husband.

I know that I have up-staged myself in relating this, and have caused many readers to ask "Why don't you write your father's 'life'; it is obviously of more interest than your own?" I accept the rebuke, but persist in my folly.

The honeymoon period faded. Perhaps my father wished he had taken advantage of the freedom my mother's death gave him to go in another direction. The ostensible reason for the first rows, which grew as each supplied appetite for the next, was unbelievably absurd. Cissie was sending small presents to her (their) ten-year-old daughter in Derry; absurd trifles she had bought at the "Barrows"; a huge bathroom sponge, for instance. The Old Man objected to this expenditure of "his" money, unmindful of the fact that she had deserted the girl in the care of her brothers to join her "husband". It may have been that he did not want to maintain a link between her and her brothers. Whatever the reason, the form it took soon degenerated into accusations that she, middle-aged, stout, and unbecoming, was having affairs, and sneaking "fancy men" into the house.

Cissie was not my timid little mother, stunned by a filthy word, and heart-broken at a blow. She gave as good as she got, and on one occasion split the Old Man's head with the poker - but spoiled the effect by falling on her knees beside him crying: "Oh, John, I've killed you." Then as she fetched a glass of water to revive the corpse, he snatched the glass from her hand and threw the contents into her face. Her most effective weapon was the use of the window, this she threw open and called at the top of her voice like one in fear of her life. This would get the Old Man into a panic. Not that the neighbours would pay any attention, or do anything, everybody was entitled to his or her own row, but it spoiled the Old Man's image as he strode down the street with military stride, pipe clutched in his hand near his mouth, in positive and assured respectability.

I should not have paid any attention to these rows and antics, but I did. They tore my soul to pieces. I set everything into a universal context. It was all a pattern of truth and life of cosmic significance. I lived in a daze on the verge of a breakdown. This was of course exacerbated by Cissie's treatment of the other children, Harry, Ena and Maisie. To go into details about this would repel readers sensitive on child cruelty, and probably cost me credibility. I will only say what can be proved on the record. One morning she beat my little brother so soundly that his cries - and my futile protests - brought a lodger from her room just when Harry was being held up at arm's length by the ears and shaken like a doormat... the lodger inter-

vened, and a few days later we had a visit from an officer of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

This led to a court case and would have carried a custodial sentence if it had not been there were children to be cared for, so a year's probation was given. A week or so later the three children were taken into care for a few months, though the sentence was not changed. The case was reported on the front page of one of the evening papers. I knew the staff were talking about it in the Picture House, and wondering, in whispers, if it could be me. One of the cleaners was insensitive enough to ask. I was deeply embarrassed and mumbled "No" and turned away to hide my red face and tears.

WILLIAM GILFEDDER

Eight Poems

LAST OF THE 7 SAMURAI

I who once trailed the magic corridors of the east
Who in all things jade ruled like an emperor
Am reduced to this.
I who in the heyday of my youth bestrode the silver screen
Like a colossus
Am shrunk to this size.
I who from dawn to dusk, championed at no extra cost
Freedom, justice, eternal optimism
And anything else you care to mention
Am catapulted into obscurity.
I who once, almost nearly, made sub-editor of wishful thinking
At the emperor's palace
Am doing this,
Demonstrating the most noble and ancient art
Of pear-splitting
In of all places Glasgow.
May the ancestors of my genes forgive me.
God what next, lecture tours at sunrise?
Banzai!
Banzai!

BLACK MONDAY

Is it the ex-guru of economics contemplating the horrors
Of his miscalculated theories?
Is it the advocate of the free-enterprise system
Regardless of the personal consequences?
Is it an angel who's fallen from fiscal grace?
Whoever he is
Something in the economic climate isn't agreeing with him

So he's taking something for it.
Meanwhile, back in the city....



THERE ARE SOME POLITICIANS

There are some politicians who actually believe
That the sun does indeed rise
From behind the platform of the Tory Party Conference
Whose idea of a heaven on earth
Is not Paradise
But a majority in Parliament -
Bliss for them is it in that dawn to be alive
But to be a Tory is very heaven

POLITICS IN AMERICA

Gee baby I don't know much about politics
But I'll tell you one thing
I sure as hell ain't gonna vote for no party
That tries to persuade me different
No matter how they write the style of Gods
Or make a push at chance and sufferance
So let's go dancing
And I'll try and show you a good time
For like the man said
There ain't no free meal
And tickets are hard to come by

WHAT'S HIS POLITICS

What's his politics?
O somewhere between Father Christmas
And Attila the Hun
That's the kind of political platform I like
One with a very broad base
Keeps the bastards guessing.

DOOMSDAY SPEAK

As the senior lecturer in medieval history once said
(And he said it in all seriousness):
"So what you're actually saying is, is that the bunny rabbit
Was at the centre of the transition period
From a feudalistic society to a capitalist economy."

HARD TIMES

I can remember when the lucky winners of these competitions
Were lured to their death by such exotic prizes as
2 weeks in the Bahamas
Or driven crazy by the sight of the latest wheeled wonder
To hit the showrooms
Now all you get to forget about your troubles is
Free sausages
And we'll pay your mortgage for a whole year.

SCOTLAND TO-DAY

Stands Scotland where she did
Not any more
The way it's turning into one big service station
Why the hell don't they just hang up a big Esso sign
At the border and be done with it
Free heather, with every 6 gallons of Scotland's life blood
You can buy.

Brendan McLaughlin

Glasgow's Not For Sale.

Before 1954 the only houses to be seen in Castlemilk were a few cottages and the imposing Castlemilk House, the family seat of the Stirling Stewarts.

Cathkin Braes was gifted to Glasgow in 1886, by James Dick, 'to be held in perpetuity for the people of Glasgow as a health resort'. At that time, it certainly did no one any harm to sit up there and take in the breathtaking views of the City. Among the mills and factories, grand churches and great mansions were prominent as they spread out from the tollbooth at Glasgow Cross. From its centre, the eye could wander along the thin lines of roads as they wound their way through the many villages which bejewelled the picture and it wouldn't take the mind of a poet to understand why it was called 'The Dear Green Place'. Gorbals, Bridgeton, Springburn, Partick, Anderston and Govan were already in the City's embrace but further out, were the delightful dots of Drumchapel, Pollok and Easterhouse, almost untouched by the grasp of the City. Indeed the sight of Glasgow and its environs would have ended the travels of many a worthy journeyman. However, as the stranger crossed the Glasgow Bridge, it would quickly become apparent that hidden among the Victorian wynds and the ancient feudal-strips, were horrors of human degradation which would shock even the most hardy individual.

The mansions had been vacated by the merchants and Mill owners, who had them built, as they fled the pollution of their own factories. From around the Glasgow Green and Calton, they had moved up to and beyond the new Merchant City which they had designed to keep the ordinary Glaswegian out. They didn't just leave their old houses empty but had them divided up so that as many people as possible could get into them. This way they not only covered the cost of removal but created a lucrative room-letting business. There was no shortage of people to rent these rooms due to the massive surge of immigrants throughout the early and mid 19th century.

Although the City had rapidly expanded in size and population since the 1707 Act Of Union with England, through the import of tobacco and the proliferation of cotton mills, as the 19th century rolled on it became the centre of iron and steel making and industries related to these. As colonial markets opened up and domestic consumption increased, shipbuilding and heavy engineering became prominent, to serve the manufacturing

and export of an incredible range of goods made in Glasgow. The City soon became known as the work-shop of the world. Glasgow, then, owed its very existence, as a major city, to colonialism and the Industrial Revolution both of which were brutal, exploitative and finite.

Industry never did manage to absorb all the people who flooded into Glasgow and it was those who were excluded that had to live in the filthy 18th century closes and dilapidated mansions of the old merchant city around Glasgow Cross and Glasgow Green. However, no one among the ordinary people could assume a safe distance from such deprivation because of the downward moving trade cycles. People only worked when the employers needed them and were laid off when they didn't. Also, in the latter part of the century, there occurred the first really serious economic depressions and unemployment was never far from any door. Conditions in these warrens of human indignity were horrendous often with no sanitary facilities at all. In one close in the Calton, there were six entrances of four stories with six doors on each level housing over six hundred people. A series of photographs commissioned in the latter part of the 19th century, by Thomas Annan, records all these closes but could never convey the unspeakable horrors of such a way of life.

The unbelievable thing is that these people had to pay rent for the privilege of living in such wretched holes while their landlords strutted about the new merchant city or up at the new town of Blytheswood. It was only after outbreaks of cholera and typhoid, diseases with no respect for social class location, that concern grew about the living conditions.

In 1863, the Town Council appointed Glasgow's first Public Officer of Health, Dr. William Gardener, and it was he who introduced the 'ticketing' system of controlling the number of people who could live in one roomed houses. These 'single ends' as they were known, often slept up to thirty people at a time and were regarded as the hotbeds of disease. In 1866, 'The City Improvements Act'... unique to Glasgow, commanded the setting up of a trust to demolish the worst of the slums and provide new housing for the poor. Although the slums seemed to shift around in the wake of demolition, the Town Council built many fine tenements some of which are still lived in today. The first of these was opened at the Saltmarket and represented the first municipal housing development in the world.

By the turn of the 20th century, all the owners of commerce and industry had moved westward, well away from the City Centre up through Park Circus and along Great Western Road. In effect, they abandoned it to the people by selling many of their interests to the Glasgow Corporation which had established a very strong and far reaching relationship with the ordinary folk of Glasgow through their municipal responsibilities.

By now, all the inner villages and their networks of social and industrial infrastructure had developed into one another creating a solid working class belt which surrounded the City.

Glasgow had truly become the Worker's City.

Uncertainty, however, never lifted its cloud and continued to tyrannise Glaswegians as they struggled to maintain a decent standard of living. Although it is argued that Glasgow was the product of the Industrial Revolution, many say that it was also the victim. Its fortunes were inextricably linked to the British Empire which was, by the beginning of the 20th century, on a steady decline. Foreign markets vanished at an alarming rate as more and more countries became industrialised and international trade became more competitive.

In Glasgow, this meant the depression of wages and the loss of much that helped to make life just tolerable. In the struggle with the employers who complained of dwindling profits and insisted on cut-backs, lay-offs and wage-cuts, the Clydeside workers organised themselves in Trade Unions and generally became a highly politicised community. But while the 'Red Clydeside' was busy challenging employers and landlords through a series of bitter strikes, plans were being made to deal with inner-city populations all over Britain. It was thought that they presented a problem to the stability of British society because of their history of militant political action and a lawlessness among those who were never really assimilated into urban industrial society.

Some argue that it was the Clydeside itself that prompted the debate on inner-city problems due to the intense concentration and solidarity of an intelligent urban working-class. Just as in 1866, a special case was made for redeveloping Glasgow; in the inter-war period, as quickly and cheaply as possible, over 54,000 houses were built with public assistance.

The New Town Act of 1946 introduced a new way of thinking in which people would be enticed to leave the urban areas for new houses in healthier environments in 'garden cities'. Investment would inevitably follow due to inducements of low rental commercial and industrial units with a cheap, local workforce. East Kilbride and Cumbernauld were to become examples of this. However, at an astonishing pace, the building of council houses continued to consume the peripheral green-sites.

That such a programme would split the urban population, to a large extent, into economically homogeneous groupings, is a fact of history. That it was designed to do so is a subject that Social Historians will argue about for years to come. This was done by building schemes of houses of varying standards and differential rating in order that people on similar wage levels would automatically come together. It achieved a number of very far reaching effects, simultaneously. It began the process of breaking up the old system of private-factoring, where young people got houses to rent next to their parents. This caused the first signs of breakdown in the complex matrilineal system of social relations, causing many young families to become isolated in their new homes. It breached the integrity of the collective consciousness which tolerated the diverse human characteristics

within the community and gave it a sense of solidarity. Perhaps the most striking consequence, however, was the corrosion of the cohesiveness of an industrial proletariat which had always demonstrated the potential to be a major political challenge.

Blackhill and Milton were some of the first schemes to be built and these were quickly occupied by low income families, while those with higher incomes began to move out to Knightswood and Mosspark. As the demolition derby of the 1950's and 1960's started to take its toll, population movement gained greater momentum and there was an inordinate rush to build more and more high-density council houses. Drumchapel, Castlemilk and Pollok began to take shape and a myriad of contiguous developments appeared in the northern and eastern areas of the City.

Initially, folk were delighted to move out to what must have seemed like the countryside. Some had back and front doors with gardens and others had verandahs, but all had inside toilets and bathrooms. It was a great joy for most to finally get away from the single-ends and room-and-kitchens with their outside toilets and legacy of T.B. and rickets.

It wasn't long, however, before the problems of many of the schemes began to show prominence. There was no integrated structure, with a striking absence of all the amenities that had been enjoyed in the old communities.

People more and more resisted being moved to the schemes but it was too late, demolition had been so frantic and thorough that places like the Gorbals, Govan and Anderston didn't really exist anymore.

It would seem that Glasgow has always had a housing problem and the authorities were given much sympathy as they appeared to be fighting a losing battle in the face of an ever increasing population and a declining industrial complex. They were not culpable, it was argued, they did not invite the immigrants, nor cause the industrial decline and how else could they house a massive population? However, what most people were never aware of was an enduring debate on how best to develop Glasgow in the inevitability of it becoming a post-industrial society. There were two dominating schools of thought and these represented more than just a concern about how to house people or improve the City: the Clyde Valley Plan and Bruce Plan. The Clyde Valley Plan, drawn up in the late 1940's, was based on the principle that Glasgow should try to keep within its pre-1945 boundaries. It was consistent with the 'New Town Act' in so much as it advocated that places like Cumbernauld and East Kilbride should develop while opposing the idea of having large schemes built on the edge of the City. Glasgow Corporation was hostile to these proposals wanting instead to maintain a high population level within the boundaries as population drift would have diminished it's position as a major City.

The Bruce Plan was the brain child of Robert Bruce who was impressed by the rebuilding of those European Cities most affected by bombing

during the second world war. Cities like Dresden and Hamburg which were devastated, had to be built again from scratch... a town planners dream. These were developed in a manner which abandoned the old Greek and Roman Grid-system adopted by most cities in the world. With the exception of a few historical buildings, Bruce wanted Glasgow to be totally demolished and rebuilt along these new lines. For him it was perverse that the people lived in the City Centre and travelled out to their work, unlike most European Cities where the populace lived on the outskirts. What he, and most planners that followed him, were totally insensitive to, were the reasons why Glasgow was not like other cities. It never had a settled or 'total' community, like most major cities, but was more a dormitory-town for the workers... the key factors in its industrial development. To a large degree also, during the Industrial Revolution, the upper and middle classes moved away from its centre leaving it to those who worked there and the unfortunates, caught up in the poverty trap, scraping a living in the streets. Glasgow was not a glorious City, it was populated by poor people whose struggles for a bit of stability in their lives forced very deep and dear roots establishing a very tough and widespread undergrowth of common culture. But it was regarded by those with power and authority as being a culture without credit... as transitory as the industrial processes that brought it together. And, therefore, expendable.

Unfortunately for Glaswegians, their characteristics of political dissent and solidarity, which appeared to so worry Parliament, depended on the vagaries of industry and continued investment. When the relationship between these began to crumble, with Britain's decline as a trading nation, so too did the community. As investors took their money elsewhere, to developing countries with no advanced workforce and where cheap labour was plentiful, real long term and biting poverty became prevalent once again. Dereliction became more extensive among the tenements, many of which had been allowed to fall into disgraceful levels of disrepair, and by the 1950's and 1960's comprehensive development plans were drawn up to radically change the demographic structure of the City. Once again the people of Glasgow were singled out for positive discrimination. Glasgow Corporation, without the slightest consultation with the people they were supposed to represent, were bent on a programme of urban clearances and the creation of a belt of bleak homelands for the industrial refugees of the Clydeside. In many respects, the 'Bruce Plan' must have guided their hand as they all but totally de-populated the inner areas of the City while banishing the people to the peripheries. This was carried out with no real consideration for any social or community imperatives.

Although places like East Kilbride were developing apace, tenants had to have employment in the area of the New Town to qualify for a house. This was designed to avoid the establishment of the kind of problem-populations that were considered to have appeared in the new schemes with the

increase of structural unemployment.

That there were no realisable human characteristics in these comprehensive plans was observable early on in the construction of schemes, yet they kept on building. With demolition and building contracts already having been signed, it was probably impossible for the Corporation to halt the process.

There was, however, a recognition that despite this grand scale of redevelopment, it was not enough to cope with the masses of population ... and still Glasgow Corporation wanted to keep to the scheme of high-density house building within its boundaries. In the 1960's and early 1970's, pre-cast concrete fabrications were being used to build those high-rise blocks which became prominent in every city in Britain. It is hard to believe, but these were regarded as the solution to the problems of housing families for whom there was always a major shortage of accommodation. By the mid 1970's almost all of the old communities had vanished, either up the scheme closes or out of sight up the heights of high-rise flats.

With these anti-architectural and anti-social developments, there was the loss of a finely tuned and closely integrated community with a history of stoutly defending its hard and honest working-class identity ... social-dynamite to social junk.

Amid much talk in the City-Chambers of building a City fit for our children to live in, there was never any thought to genuine ways of creating the conditions for nurturing children to live in the new City. You either lived out in the owner-occupier leafiness of the likes of Bearsden or Bishopbriggs or were forced to endure the skyscrapers or schemes.

After the spectacular failures in their pathetic attempts to re-introduce cheap housing into areas like the Gorbals and Springburn, such as the Hutchie 'E' and Balgray Hill disasters, Glasgow Corporation seemed to give up trying. Some argue that they never did really try anyway, but others are prepared to accept that there was a genuine attempt to solve the problem of housing a concentrated urban population which no longer had a definable function in post-industrial society. Neglect turned into abandonment with over 150,000 people living in desolate schemes and many more than that stranded in tower blocks. Not only was Glasgow left with the biggest and most problematic housing schemes in Europe, but, in the Gorbals, it also had the most concentrated level of high-rise living than in any other city in Britain.

Just as in the previous times, the people's communities had been destroyed, but the difference was that this time it was murder under trust. The great Labour traditions that became established on the Clyde assumed that the Council would always be controlled by the 'Labour Party', democratic and committed to the principle of municipalism. For an almost unbroken period of 30 years this trust gave the Labour-controlled Corpo-

ration full reign to re-develop the City without fully realising there was never any recognisable coherence in their policies.

When the Glasgow Corporation changed to Glasgow District Council, in 1975, the attitude of Councillors seemed to change with it. Although, increasingly, they never showed much consideration for the people, now it was as if they were out to persecute them. This was most poignantly observed during the deplorable fiasco over what was responsible for the endemic levels of dampness in the Hutchie 'E' complex. Although they knew that the design of the flats did not include adequate dampproofing for the climate in Scotland, the Council blamed it on families and their breathing habits as they slept at night. This seemed to usher in a new and cynical approach which had the effect of kicking people's teeth down their throats then blaming them for being gumsy.

The Council had gambled, again, the welfare of the people against cheap housing... and lost... but were not prepared to admit it. Glasgow was left with the insuperable problems of a public housing stock much of which was 'impossible to let', a shortage of private rented accommodation and the need to refurbish all those larger tenements which had survived the bulldozers. Then, in 1969 with the, 'Government Grants (special needs) Act', the new horizon appeared... in the shape of the 'Urban Renewal Policy' which, surprise surprise, made Glasgow its chief focus with the £100m G.E.A.R. Programme.

The G.E.A.R. programme concentrated on the East End of the City, with the notion that, by doing so, the whole of Glasgow would benefit. Although many new and better designed houses were eventually built, it had no real long term effect in terms of social or employment infrastructure. It certainly never had much effect on the City Centre.

Glasgow had been left with an inner-city area which resembled any of the bombed-out cities of the war. It was often heard said, 'what Hitler couldn't do, the Council did'. This was how the greatest Municipal City in Britain met the 1980's.

All that and an ever increasing level of long term, structural unemployment.

Its heart ripped to pieces and its veins sucked dry, the once proud City was elbowed into its own rubble and left to die.

Then, in stepped the extravagant swagger of the private-sector developers and the New Glasgow had begun its ascendancy.

Already well versed in the Government grant-system through the Urban Renewal programmes such as the vast range of house-improvement grants, they were expert in manipulating the local authorities into assisting them in their rape of Glasgow.

With the legislation that forced District Councils to adopt the council house sales policy, much of the better public development areas 'to let' fell deeper into neglect, private development companies offered to take them

over, restore them, and sell them off. In July 1982, one such company 'Barratts Urban Renewal', was expressly set up for that purpose. Already the Parent Company was building houses on every available gap-site it could get its hands on. Despite there being a declared principle amongst certain elected members of the District Council not to sell off any Council property, these developments went on unabated. With so many of the tenements outside the schemes, now in private ownership or control, people excluded from the job market, the young, the old, the disabled, widowed, and so on, continuously find themselves being shuffled out to the very worst housing areas in the City.

The very serious questions here are, what will these people on State Benefit, and who do not qualify for mortgages, do when all the good council houses are sold to tenants and the undesirable ones sold to the developers? Will they live in Government-controlled hostels... or worse? Is that to be the final solution to the problem of the industrial refugees of Glasgow and their children?

In 1982 also, a new kind of housing development had reached completion and this seemed to herald a new age in urban-renewal. The Albion Buildings at the corner of Albion Street and Ingram Street had been totally refurbished and where there once sat an old disused commercial building now proudly stood a beautifully designed block of houses. They were quite expensive but 'what the hell', how else could one buy a desirable domestic property so close to the City Centre?

There was a genuine, positive reaction by the people of Glasgow to this type of rehabilitation as for years these areas were dead. Just down the road at Bell Street, there was rejoicing in the market place as stall-holders at the new Candleriggs Market awaited an increase in business.

This new shopping complex was in the old Glasgow Fruit-Market which had been leased from Glasgow District Council for at least thirty years by W.W. Promotions, a Southern-English based operator who then rented it out to the traders.

Things were looking up for the City.

It would be simple to say, 'no one could have guessed what these two developments were to lead to' but this would be to completely underrate the foresightedness of its architects.

Immediately following this, the Houndsditch Department Store in Ingram Street was closed down to be transformed into houses. In Wilson Street, too, a fine refurbishment was being carried out while other projects were being undertaken in Bell Street, Montrose Street, High Street, Blackfriar Street and different properties all the way along to Queen Street. Building after building in the area was renovated into domestic property.

The District Council was delighted with this injection of investment into what was once a rapidly decaying part of the City. Where there were

spaces, new building took place in such a way as to fit into the area. Meanwhile at Cowcaddens, Govan, St. George's Cross, Govanhill, around the Glasgow Green and many different parts of the City, new, private housing was being built by many different contractors. The old name of 'Merchant City' was unearthed from where it had been notionally dumped and given a new lease of life. Indeed, it became the catch-phrase for the new epoch of regeneration..... while much of the rest of the City was in a state of degeneration. Just over the river there were many campaigns to get the houses brought up to minimum legal standards. Queen Elizabeth Square was one of these complexes only fifteen years after it had opened. Even worse, a demolition-hammer's throw away, was the decomposing Hutchie 'E' where the last of the residents were holding their breath in anticipation of a move to a dry house.

But where would they go?

In every scheme there were cries of dampness, rotting window frames, downright illegal electrical systems, leaking roofs, etc. etc. Who in their right mind would accept any of these? Needless to say but it took years and concentrated campaigns to see the last tenant in Hutchie 'E' rehoused, a period during which they had become worse than animal hutches.

Meanwhile Paul Mugnaioni's office in promoting the 'Cyclical Repair System', was to prove once and for all that the ability of Glasgow District Council to maintain its housing stock was now non-existent. Not only did he see the graffiti on the wall, so did all the big developers. He resigned from his immensely well-paid job as director of housing with Glasgow District Council, to help form 'Quality Street' which was set up to buy the most dilapidated houses, do them up and rent or sell them.

Plans were drawn up to redevelop the derelict Hutchie 'E' site and after a public row about which developer should get the contract, it was decided that none of the plans were suitable. The Council did not want another public scandal like the heavy breathing allegations. It was crucial to ensure the return of the tenants was to a properly thought-out and constructed layout of houses and amenities.

None of the proposals which the developers submitted were thought to come up to the required standard and were rejected. The concerned public were informed through the local media that the whole issue was to go back for further consultation and that was the end of it for now.

Back in the Candleriggs Market there was great concern as the traders received the news that their landlord had gone into liquidation. However, there was relief all round when they learned that the lease was being taken over by another Southern-English operator, Graysim Holdings. What was even better, although many thought it was rather sinister, it turned out that they just happened to share the same address and staff as W.W. Promotions, so thankfully there was to be no change. Nevertheless, there were many other changes happening in the City Centre which did worry them.

Down at the Briggait another big market was being constructed in the old Glasgow Fishmarket by the Briggait Company Ltd., a subsidiary of Prudential Insurance. Moreover, there was a strong rumour that the Cheese market, across the road from Candleriggs, was to become a shopping mall. What worried them most was the proposed developments down at St. Enoch Square and up at the top of Buchanan Street... multi-million pound shopping malls.

One consolation they felt was the new S.E.C.C. which hosted a new market at the weekends. Unfortunately this arrangement didn't last long and the stallholders had to drag all their stuff back to their vans under the shadow of yet another new hotel... the Forum, moving in while the marketplace moves out. 'Very confusing' one trader was heard to say, 'far too many hotels and shopping-complexes already'.

It seems he was right, as the St Enoch Square Centre was being bolted into position the Briggait closed down for want of customers and was eventually sold to The Glasgow Briggait Company Ltd, a subsidiary of The Noble Leisure Organisation Ltd. One bankrupt trader spoke angrily about it being rather strange that the Council was selling off its historical assets like those old markets. He went on about how the town was full of nothing but fancy hotels, expensive shopping centres and huge car-parks and that there were no ordinary people left. 'How can small businesses like mine survive', he lamented, 'when the Council let the whole City Centre be taken over by big speculators who close some parts of it down in order to create interest in their new developments elsewhere? Where will it all end'?

These are not the only questions that should be asked. Why is it that with the lowest level of car ownership in the U.K., Glasgow has got the highest number of miles of urban-motorway in Britain? Why has Glasgow got the greatest number of Local Authority housing in Europe crammed just inside its boundaries on desolate peripheral sites? Why, more than any other City in the British Isles, has there been a preoccupation with massive urban renewal? Why do Glaswegians have to tolerate the manipulation and disruption of their everyday lives as housing plans change and landmark buildings like the St. Enoch's Hotel and Boots' Corner vanish almost overnight? Why does there have to be the seemingly endless forest of scaffolding in the City Centre, and the deliberate creation of large gapsites, as in the Gorbals, which then lie for years awaiting the further development of the motorway system? Most importantly, how is it that in a Labour-controlled, renowned City like Glasgow, which has always prided itself on democracy and has just recently reaffirmed its pledge to Open Government, is there apparently carte blanche for private speculators and developers?

The clue to this might appear to lie in the principles of the 'Act' which

commanded penetrating levels of urban renewal, but it could just as easily be to do with the Council's willingness to abandon municipal responsibilities and certain councillors' *desires* to get in on the act of development. This was to be achieved through a commitment from Central Government and Local Authorities to work in 'partnership' with the private sector for regeneration of urban areas.

Not since the days of T. Dan Smith was there such an open invitation for councils and councillors to work with the business community and facilitate their projects. These 'partnerships' were established all over Britain and were dependent on the willingness of Local Authorities and developers to work closely together.

Glasgow District Council came to accept these urban 'partnerships', ultimately with enthusiasm and great commitment. As one observer commented, 'when developers visited the City, they used to creep in at the side door, now the councillors bring them in at the front door, one on each arm'. Not only had it become respectable for councillors to be seen with developers, it soon became imperative to be involved with them. Indeed, it got to the stage where councillors and developers became indistinguishable. The only real way they could be told apart was that the developer was always talking and the councillor was forever nodding his or her head.

By the mid 1980's while more and more Glaswegians were slipping into the mud of hopeless poverty, there was much celebrating going on in the City Centre. Struthers Advertising and Marketing Ltd. had discovered a way to make Glasgow miles better. 'Better than what?' some people asked.

For helping them think up this idea Michael Kelly was immortalised as the wee, yellow, smiling Glasgow man. Perhaps Sir Michael does not take a tippie because most Glaswegians who smile these days are 'mortal'... or getting richer, like Struthers who made great commercial mileage out of the Glasgow's Miles Better franchise.

He never did tell us what was hidden behind this wee cheeky slogan, but it soon became patently obvious ... **BETTER THAN IT USED TO BE.**

This gave the Council leaders even more reason to get out there and get among them with their Glasgow's Miles Better bunnets in their hands.

At last they could throw off the chains of municipalism, it belonged to the past. Tweed jackets and scruffy shoes were left in tailor's waste-bins as the double-breasted suit and shiny leather slip-on took over. A new image for the councillors and a new image for the City.

Corporate plans were drawn up with almost anybody who wanted a piece of the action. Glasgow became known as the City where everything moves... when, where and whoever the new Glasgow demanded. The District and Regional Councils joined up with local businesses and the Scottish Development Agency and called themselves 'Glasgow Action'. Through this, chances would not be missed as information would run freely between all the agencies. The seeds of opportunity would be sewn

during the Garden Festival, tracks would be laid for the race ahead. The engine of change was revved up and ready to go into top gear, all they were waiting for was the starter's flag.

Glasgow, 'European Capital of Culture 1990', at last the 'red flag' has been lifted... they're off.

From all over they came to play with the new Glasgow. They flew up from London and jetted in from New York. Saatchi and Saatchi made certain that everybody that was anybody knew about the new consumption palaces and grand concerts.

Champagne corks popped and budgets were chopped. Diners and dancers and Corporate chancers flung themselves into the fling. Never before did *savoir-faire* have such a field day.

Glasgow was on the skite... but only the chosen few got a bite of the cherry.

'But what about this Red Clydeside we hear so much about' shouted a breathless young thing. 'You're dancing on it' replied an ageing, silver-headed devil in a double-breasted suit, 'We just haven't got around to having the grave stone inscribed yet.'

The municipal Jewels had been lodged in the pawn and the Glasgow folk could just stand and look on. Almost as if they had got the last party-hat the S.D.A. announced, on the first of April 1990, that they were changing their name to 'Scottish Enterprise'. Was it a coincidence that this just happened to be April Fools Day?

A lot of Glaswegians don't think so, but they're not laughing.

That the developments in Glasgow have no respect for the people and the future welfare of the City can be seen when parallels are drawn with similar developments in the U.S.A. From these, a new form of developers-hype took over which imitated what was going on in many American Cities, especially along the lines of 'We Love You New York'. This was coined to promote New York out of a bankruptcy in which poverty and homelessness littered the streets with its human baggage.

Recent reports on these speculations indicate that there was a disastrous level of over-accumulation and wasteful investment. Similar to the Wall Street Crash in 1929, which was caused by overproduction and no ability for the public to buy goods and services, these experiences will have very long and damaging effects on the economies of such urban communities. These have become 'dual' Cities where the skyline is painted with gold and the pavements are coloured with the cardboard and begging cups of modern poverty.

In Glasgow, in 1990, this type of economics has a linguistic mask of success which hides the ghostly profile of a murdered heritage and a bloodless imported culture.

With its concentration on building this new image, there has been an accelerated downward spiral of social and economic decline in the

schemes. Although the District Council claim that the promotion is financed with special funds, they cannot deny that increasingly scarce resources are being used to capture development capital. For the economist this is, in effect, the multiplier in reverse in favour of speculators who will take the profits and move on to other cities. Along with them, they will take free-hold or very long-term lease-hold rights to many of Glasgow's municipal treasures.

As mentioned before, the Fruit and Fish markets are gone and it was only after an independent survey valued the Cheese Market at £2m that it was not sold for £640,000 as was planned. It is still on the market and is scheduled to become another Merchant City upmarket shopping/housing/restaurant complex. 'A' listed buildings and vacant ground in Howard, Osborne and Stockwell Streets have recently been sold to speculators. Indeed Granite House at Argyll and Stockwell Streets was sold secretly for a price of £6.5m to Barry Clapham of Credential Holdings, who then trebled the rent for the different tenants who had been operating small businesses there for years. Almost all of them had to move out. Similarly the building on the corner of Howard and Stockwell Streets, was sold to Windex for £1.7m who also forced out most of the businesses. The list is never ending and that is despite the insistence of the Council that it would not sell off any municipal property. When even a partial list of sales and very long leases is catalogued, the magnitude of this lie can be observed.

Using the S.D.A., now Scottish Enterprise, as a clearing house, Glasgow District Council has become one of the most prominent speculators and certain councillors have become very adept at spotting opportunities. Although it was British Rail who sold the St. Enoch Square Complex to the S.D.A. who, in turn sold it on to the unlikely partnership of Sears Properties Ltd. and the Church of England Commissioners, how the District Council let them alter Glasgow's groundscape in such a fundamental manner, is a question which probably will never be answered.

Aitkenhead house, bequeathed to Glasgow by Lord Aitkenhead of Kings Park, was sold for £1000 to be made into private houses. Rouken Glen Park was sold to Eastwood District Council who then sold off Deaconsbank municipal golf-course. Even the Glasgow City Hall could be put up for grabs. The S.D.A. was sold most of the car-park sites in the City Centre and have either already sold or are in the process of selling them off to the likes of Kings Car-parking. The tale of woe-begotten deals goes on and on but there are a number of very crucial developments that are being processed today and which should come under close public scrutiny. 'The Crown Street Regeneration Project', on the doomed Hutchie 'E' site keeps the controversy of the Gorbals Saga going. The District Council tried a Pontious Pilate scheme by selling this thirty-four acre site to the S.D.A. who, being project leaders, held a design competition asking for plans to

rebuild the site along German Urban Renewal lines. An English company won it by designing an integrated housing plan of one thousand houses over a period of eight years. 75% will be owner occupier and the other 25% will be made up of sheltered, and special-needs with most being stepped-ownership, i.e. half owned. The successful company, Campbell, Zogolovitch, Wilkinson and Gough centred their design on the Berlin Exhibition of careful and sensitive urban renewal. With the council house sale policy, it is certain that this whole site will become totally private in a very short space of time. With the rumblings about demolishing the Queen Elizabeth Square flats it would not be outrageous to expect a drive to take over the whole of the Gorbals. This would fit in with plans to privatise and upgrade the banks of the Clyde on both sides of the river. Already the site of the Garden Festival is being privately developed despite the option that the District Council could have bought it from the Clyde Port Authority. We are told that £5.2m had to be raised to help build the new Glasgow Concert Hall by selling off property in the Merchant City and the Broomielaw, and striking a deal with Grosvenor Square Property plc and Bredero Properties plc and John Lewis, allowing for the massive Buchanan Street shopping mall, twice the size of the St. Enoch Square Centre, to be built. It is interesting to note that with the completion of this centre, there will have been £430m spent on shopping amenities since 1985, in a City Centre which already boasted one of the most concentrated shopping areas in Britain.

Why did the Council need this money when the Cost of building the Concert Hall was around £30m and the insurance money, and its interest, in the bank, from the St Andrew's Hall, had grown to £24m with a further £8.5m from Bruce Millan, in his role as European Commissioner?

Why is the Concert Hall registered as 'Cultural Enterprises Ltd', a private company whose directors are strangely not listed but who are reputed to be leading councillors? Jean McFadden, Pat Lally, Council Leaders, and Martin Caldwell of 'The Anti-Privatisation Committee' were all members of the Concert Hall Working Party through which it was privately registered. Also, why has the Clyde Port Authority just recently become a limited company?

It is not hard to see a picture emerging in 1990 which points at the determination to privatise the whole of the City Centre and all along the riverbanks.

Of the more recent developments, the proposals to lease one third of the Glasgow Green to a private speculator for a period of 125 years has caused a great public outcry. Once again, the same council leaders are the main supporters of it despite public misgivings about proposed conversion into an upmarket leisure complex which only those who can pay will be able to use. These include a disco, an hotel and a Blackpool-type of water-world. One old Calton woman was heard to say, 'it's not the parks they

want to get rid of, it's the perks and anyway the only water facility we want on the 'Green' is 'Wet Wet Wet'. At least they didn't cost us anything'.

Although three companies are submitting separate proposals, it has already become known that two of them are associated companies, 'Citygrove' is in with the 'Rank Organisation', while the third company, 'Sport and Leisure PLC', is to become operationally linked with 'Rank'. All very complicated, as often happens in long-lease deals. A good example of this is in Auchinlea Park near Easterhouse, where a large section was sold to Velware Ltd., a company which promised to build factories and provide jobs for local people. After a short while, the Company went into liquidation, was bought over by another company, and all the conditions of the original sale were negated in the take-over. Now they are turning it into a leisure-complex with a few part-time, badly paid jobs most of which will be to do with collecting the entry money. The fact remains that this land is lost to the public forever. A '125 year lease' is known in business circles as a buyers-lease because of the impossibility of the actual deed-holders ever getting it back again. Think of this: 125 years from now is into the 22nd century. Can you imagine the Council or the public ever getting the Glasgow Green back? But those on the Glasgow Green are not the only current dealings to give Glasgow's parks away to private speculators, there are plans to develop parts of Springburn Park and they have just allowed the band stand in Kelvingrove Park to be turned into a privately owned public house.

The first house to be let in Castlemilk was in 1955 and as the dream turned into the nightmare, which a good part of it is today, there was always the consolation of sitting up there on Cathkin Braes and dreaming of better things to come. A person could have looked down on Glasgow as the clouds of demolition dust settled to reveal the new Glasgow. No more industrial chimneys and, with the exception of one or two that were left, the only cranes to be seen on the Clydeside were those building high-rise flats. Big fat hotels began to obscure the view with their toyland designs, as did big wide urban motorways leading into sprawling car-parks into which crept the big long cars of the double-breasted international developers.

From up in Castlemilk the City Centre seemed to get further and further away from the people as it vanished once again, this time behind the veil of cultural-entrepreneurialism. The Year of Culture: 'let's bury the mistakes of the past in the sponge of 1990, no one will notice'.

Inward-investment became the password as the cultural-speculators and tourism-touts joined hands with the District Council to form a circle into which speculators, investors and developers would throw in their stakes. Like all games of chance those with most to lose, lose most... especially if they are using other people's money. Completely out of their depth, it's not long before the riverside-gamblers and urban-cowboys have

the local small timers tied up in a game that has no end. That is why 'Glasgow's Glasgow' was forced to go on regardless, that is why Council property all over Glasgow is being sold off and that is the real reason why there is such a desperation to allow the proposed private developments on the Glasgow Green to go ahead.

1990 was the big poker game and Pat Lally, Glasgow's gambler solitaire, with the municipal purse in front of him, thought he had a winning hand. With a fool-house he bet against five-aces and will be paying the debt for many years to come.

Unfortunately for Glaswegians, it is they who are having to service the debt by having their heritage cashed in and having to suffer a shameful level of economic neglect. They are now being asked to pay for the use of common amenities and underwrite the tripe and trallywags of the vainglorious cultural industry.

How long will it be before they actually become tourists in their own City?

'I belong to Glasgow No More'.

Who would want to live there anymore anyway? Most Glaswegians have refused to be taken in by it all, what with the new City Centre houses next to dark and unpopulated no-go areas around the huge shopping-malls and car-parks, where it is getting more and more dangerous to be after dark. A perusal of the police records of incidents in the area would reveal a frightening pattern of people being attacked in the dark shadows of these modern monstrosities.

The Merchant City? No community there, just transient young couples and single folk on their way to leafy suburbia, or worse, the town houses of the very firms which are trying to exploit the City. Most of the people that live in the new City Centre are never seen, there's never any weans in prams or people having a chat with their neighbours on their way to the corner-shop. Yet these houses are way above the market price for their size and location. Developers up until now have been in a double-bubble situation by pretending that quality exists just because the price is high, but now they are being found out. The Carrick Quay housing development at the Clydeside is a typical example where there are very small two and three bedroom flats which were advertised at between £80,000 and £190,000. Only a few have been sold and not just have they had to reduce the price but building has been suspended until they can get in more money. This illustrates the 'fly-by-night' character of much of the development.

The real heart of Glasgow now beats at the edge of the City among those who have been disenfranchised and brutalised by a deplorable level of Local Authority and central government neglect. The City Centre is now a semi-populated ghost town.

The streets of Glasgow were once teeming with folk, day and night, as

they went about their everyday business but now you won't see many people at night. During the day you will, but these have either driven in to operate or consume the newly confectionalised City Centre, or have been bussed in from the likes of Castlemilk, to run it.

Even Castlemilk is not safe from the claws of privateers, More and more 'impossible-to-let' houses are being done up for sale and, at this very moment, plans are being drawn up to sell large tracts of Cathkin Braes. It seems that the Braes of Cathkin are no more sacred than the blaes of the Glasgow Green, yet both are bequeathed to the people of Glasgow.

There has been too much common property sold off already with hardly a condition... the only clause being the Santa Clause of Glasgow District Council under pressure from the cynical Tory administration, which, with the business community, has gone a long way to destroying a great City.

But although the heart has been torn out of Glasgow its spirit has survived and will continue to fight for the imperatives of an ever-changing future. By then perhaps all the questions that are not being answered today will have had an honest reply and the finger will be pointed at all those who thought they could outwit the Glasgow people and rob them of their common rights.

Freddy Anderson

Lally

Who ever chose you to be
a Glasgow councillor of sham democracy?
You arose on the poor folk's inadequacy
Hoping, mere hoping, that Labour be better than Tory,
Yet you and your cronies carry on the same old story of betrayal -
It's not merely Glasgow Green or the courage of Elspeth King,
Your actions ring more of MacDonald
Traitors decades ago - and that is the core of my poem,
You change a street name to Mandela
Yet act as a tyrant at home.

Hugh Savage

Campaigns

The Workers City Group were the first to take to the streets to make a stand in the defence of the real culture of Glasgow. When we demonstrated in Midland Street on the opening day of Glasgow's Glasgow, our loudest and most derisory jeers were reserved for Pat Lally and the rest of the Labour Party leaders. Little did he know that before the Year of Culture ended his political future would be under threat.

Some of the many banners we held aloft carried the slogan "There's a lot of con going on in 1990". The full truth of that slogan is only now being exposed, as the facts about the multi-million pound scam, the biggest and most expensive flop in Glasgow's history, begin slowly to emerge. Few could have guessed that by the end of 1990 all the directors of Glasgow's Glasgow would stand accused of financial mismanagement, and that the councillors who flaunted themselves at the opening would be distancing themselves from the exhibition and blaming the accountants Touche, Ross and Co., who in turn would be threatening to sue the Council. What a sordid mess!

While the official labour movement has turned its back on the very principles that led to its birth, we were the only workers in Scotland to celebrate a hundred years of May Day on the 1st of May 1990. We marched through the streets of the Calton behind a pipe band when our arranged meeting in the Winter Gardens was cancelled due to the Labour-controlled District Council Parks Department shutting us out of the People's Palace.

Two hundred workers marched behind the Marauders Pipe Band with a red banner in front saying "From Chicago to Glasgow 1890-1990 - One Hundred Years of May Day". At the Calton Community Centre the children of the Calton greeted us. Later that night we had an action reading of Ann Kerr's play, "The Last Threads", in which the author herself took part. Ann Kerr had worked in Hollins, the last weaving mill in Glasgow. The play, set in 1886, is based on the plight of workers who are paid off.

At the traditional May Day celebrations in Glasgow Green we set up a socialist platform without seeking permission from the District Council and re-established our right of free speech in Glasgow Green. It was an open platform where all groups could express their point of view. We had at least eleven speakers from various left-wing groups including anti-poll tax protesters. This was the first time for over fifty years that this type of

platform appeared on the Glasgow Green.

Pat Lally deliberately passed over Elspeth King for the post of Director of Museums and appointed the asset-stripper Julian Spalding. Mr Spalding had excellent qualifications, having seen-off other curators like Elspeth King who stood in his way when he was the Director in Manchester.

Then to add insult to injury they appointed a nonentity, Mark O'Neil, to the post of Keeper of Social History, although he lacked Elspeth's ability and experience, not to mention qualifications. He was obviously the creature of Lally and Spalding who were out to destroy the working class identity of the People's Palace.

In Elspeth's defence the Workers City group held a demonstration outside the City Chambers where over a thousand people turned up to protest. We got over five thousand signatures on a petition, we had several packed meetings with speakers from all sides condemning Lally, and in the Glasgow Herald and the Scotsman five hundred letters appeared, the vast majority in support of Elspeth. The story reached the *Independent*, *The Observer*, *The Spectator* and the *New Statesman*.

We picketed the National Conference of Curators at the Theatre Royal, and got hundreds more signatures. It so impressed the delegates that one of them said he had been attending conference for ten years and had never seen a demonstration in support of any curator. When Elspeth spoke she got a tremendous reception despite the sleazy attempts of Spalding, O'Neil and Davidson, the so-called Convener of Museums, to intimidate her by changing their seats.

Another struggle - the campaign to save Glasgow Green - has been sustained for a long period. Most citizens know that the District Council led by Lally has been promoting plans to lease more than a third of Glasgow Green to private developers from England. The lease is to be for 125 years. The Labour Council has no mandate for this policy. According to their election manifesto they are pledged to retaining public ownership and the improvement and development of the Green.

In the course of these campaigns we encouraged people to demonstrate outside the City Chambers. This they have done in growing numbers. On the day the East End Management Committee had to decide on the plans for the Green development, no room could be found large enough to hold the crowd, so the main council chamber was decided upon. The councillors did not know how to handle it and for one day the City Chambers really did belong to the people and the East End Management Committee rejected the development plans for the Green. One of the most refreshing incidents came when the Chairman asked how many spokespersons we wanted and, although most of us were thinking in terms of five or six, one wee woman shouted out: "Forty five!" There's confidence for you.

The last two attempts by Lally to defeat the campaign against the

proposed developments shows just how desperate he has become.

Firstly on the instructions of his council, he had to convene public meetings to explain the plans and gauge public reaction. The super democrat Lally arranged four meetings but in different parts of the city and on the same day at the same time, most likely in an attempt to give the public protest a much weaker look. Once again he underestimated the people. Despite the presence of himself at one, Jean McFadden, the City Treasurer, at a second, and Councillor Crawford and Baillie Brown at the two others, they were comprehensively trounced at all four. Although the above named individuals took the chair at their respective meetings and tried to twist things to their own advantage, they one and all suffered humiliation as the plans were overwhelmingly rejected and the call went up for No Privatisation of Glasgow Green!

Lally's latest effort is really beyond belief. It takes the form of a poll in the Evening Times with coupons to be filled in and returned to the town clerk. However, it is a purely private poll because Mr Lally decided on it without the backing of any council committee. He had no authority to launch such a poll, having consulted nobody but himself. All he has succeeded in doing is making Glasgow District Council look like a bunch of fools.

What we hope will be the final act took place on 21st November when 350 citizens turned up to protest outside the City Chambers. All the media were there including BBC television and ITV. Later in the evening a journalist phoned to say Lally and Co. had at last decided to shelve the controversial plans for Glasgow Green.

We welcome this. But we must stay vigilant and encourage ordinary people to assert themselves. Do not let career politicians of any party use you as voting fodder. Remember: we are many, they are few!

James Kelman

Storm in the Palace

Summer 1990

Visitors to the European City of Culture during recent weeks will have found more going on than either themselves or the city fathers could have anticipated. They have landed in the midst of a pitched battle, otherwise known as "the Elspeth King affair", a complex web where allegations of humbug and cover-up fly back and forth. And a steady trickle of reports have appeared in the national media. But some observers cannot understand why this apparently trivial issue should cause such repercussions.

The explosion was ignited by the creation of the new post of Keeper of Social History in the city's Museums and Art Galleries department. This was regarded by some as a possible ruse to finally wrest control from Elspeth King, Curator of the People's Palace for the past 16 years. Assisted by her deputy, Michael Donnelly, King transformed a semi-derelect building into one of the finer social history museums in Europe. In the words of Alasdair Gray: "When she took over it had all the interest of a giant lumber-room full of objects too fascinating to throw away, but which no other public place could use." King and Donnelly have spent much time and effort saving irreplaceable relics of the city's past from the District Council Rubbish Collection Unit. In 1981 the People's Palace won the European Museum of the Year Award; two years later it received the British Museum of the Year Award. King is rated by many within her profession as one of the top curators of social history in the English-speaking world.

But what's in a name? Within the bureaucracy of the museums and art galleries services the post of Keeper is graded superior to that of Curator. In effect the powers-that-be created a boss to put her in her place. She is being victimised in a shameful fashion.

The campaign in support of Elspeth King has cast doubt not only on the "Culture City" enterprise itself but on aspects of contemporary town planning, which in turn serve to highlight the shift in philosophy of government over the past decade, both locally and nationally. Of particular concern is the continued erosion of democracy and the manner in which a Labour controlled council like Glasgow District seems to relish the opportunity of implementing even the more extreme aspects of Tory party policy.

King overcame the humiliation of queueing for an interview for her own job. When she did apply she failed to get it. Labour MEP Janey Buchan is

on record as having heard months before the actual interview that this was to be the case. It is said that other insiders were aware of it around a year before. But the charade was played to the bitter end. Control of the People's Palace and its artefacts now passes from King to the newly created Keeper. One of the most recent instructions to King is that she must not receive or dispatch a letter without having it read and initialled by a superior.

There are those who may yet wonder what all the fuss is about. Within the public sector these days tales of injustice are commonplace. One of the first tactical exercises in the new approach is to railroad out those employees who continue to harbor "old-fashioned principles" - examples are rife in the health, education and social services. But the obvious parallel is with the shabby circumstances surrounding the move from London to Manchester of the National Museum of Labour History. Julian Spalding, current Director of Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, was engaged in negotiating the NMLH move north. It was Spalding who chaired the committee that rejected King's application for the post of King's application for the post of Keeper and instead appointed Mark O'Neil. Along the way he made the by now notorious comment that there were "no jobs for the girls".

Labour MP Gwyneth Dunwoody has referred to what is happening in Glasgow as "almost a mirror" of what occurred in Manchester when Terry McCarthy was sacked after being in control of the NMLH for some 13 years. McCarthy refers to "this new breed of gallery director/business manager (which) sees people like Elspeth and myself as anathema. They can't deny our academic qualifications and therefore go on about us not having the right business acumen."

Ironies and complexities abound. Julian Spalding's successful application for the Directorate at Glasgow was at the expense of Elspeth King, who had also applied for that job. Such is her reputation that she was the only employee of the museum services to be shortlisted and interviewed for it. It now seems certain Mr Spalding was "destined" for the post.

Needless to say, many people both in and outside Glasgow are appalled by what has happened, and a support campaign has been formed. It has occasioned the biggest post-bag to the *Glasgow Herald* since Billy Graham's barnstorming evangelical tour back in the 1950's. The District Labour Party itself has "deplored the decision not to appoint Ms King". The issue has been raised in the House of Commons by Norman Buchan. A petition was signed by 10,000 people, including many Labour councillors. But those in authority fail to be moved. And slowly, but surely, by implication or association, other matters have dredged their way to the surface.

In this year of 1990 the strategy adopted by Mr Patrick Lally's Labour-controlled Glasgow District Council closely resembles that of the national government. Lally is rather less circumspect than Mrs Thatcher but conducts and justifies himself in a similar manner.

One significant factor in the present controversy is the inability of officialdom to countenance criticism. While freedom of speech is under attack elsewhere in Britain, people should not be surprised to find it a "problem" here also. Elspeth King is denied the right to defend herself publicly. She is not allowed to speak to the media. She is not at liberty to express her fears of the damage the new regime will cause to the People's Palace under a policy opposed not only to her own but to the basic principles of the Labour Party itself.

Lally has also barred his own Labour councillors from commenting on the affair. Yet officials who fall into line behind him can talk to anyone they like. This extraordinary double standard continues to allow statements to be issued by Spalding and O'Neil, the new Keeper of Social History. It has also empowered senior administrators of the "Culture City" enterprise to enter into the attack; they see the present controversy as a threat to their own "1990" endeavours.

One letter in support of Elspeth King, published by the *Glasgow Herald*, bore the names of some 63 people, including such well-known critics and artists as Alasdair Gray, Edwin Morgan, Philip Hobsbawn, Liz Lochhead, Peter McDougall, Alan Spence, Agnes Owens, Tom Leonard, Archie Hind, Pat Kane, Freddie Anderson, Billy Connolly and Bernard MacLaverty. Lally's response arrived in a 2,000 -word statement to the press. He dismissed the group (and the support campaign in general) as "these dilettanti", "well-heeled authors and critics", "professional whingers". Within the same document he very ably summed up his own approach to art and culture: "It is the intention of the City Council and our colleagues on Strathclyde Region... to use the title (Cultural Capital of Europe) to the maximum advantage - we are going to milk it for all it is worth..."

Elsewhere, writers and critics have been referred to as "an embarrassment to this city and all of its cultural workforce", in which context "cultural workforce" refers to arts administrators. Some epithets include "those who choose deliberately to exclude themselves" (from the "cultural celebrations"); "pathetic, factless, plank-walking, anti-1990-ism"; the "pro-poverty lobby". Other terms are more familiar: "crypto-communists", "self-proclaimed anarchists", "trotskyists", "racists" (Mark O'Neil is Irish while Julian Spalding, the man in charge of both, is English).

The part of the controversy touching on questions of art has shown those at the helm of the 1990 programme to be rather inept, with "culture" more often than not being a synonym for "etiquette". Some old-fashioned red herrings have landed on the beach, of the "high art" versus "working-class art" and "tradition" as opposed to "the modern" variety. On the one hand critics are dismissed as elitist while on the other they are called philistine. Officials are also playing the patriot game; Glaswegians who criticise the Year of Culture or its leading exhibition, the critical and financial disaster, *Glasgow's Glasgow*, are criticising the city itself.

There has been a battery of reports in recent weeks. These include the revelations concerning the actual costs of European Culture Capital year. As much as 10 per cent of the general services' budget has been "milked" from every council department in Glasgow except housing to pay for the "Cultural Celebration". Admission charges have been introduced for the MacLellan Galleries and the *Glasgow's Glasgow* exhibition, in direct opposition to the principle of free access for the people to their own artistic and cultural heritage. *Glasgow's Glasgow* itself, now being described as "the flop of the year", is set to make a loss of some £3.5 million. The charitable company formed to operate the exhibition has had a £3 million loan from the District Council transformed into a "grant". Four directors of this company are officials of the District Council itself, including Spalding.

There is now news of further demolition in the Gorbals; structural change at the City Halls; more private development along the banks of the Clyde. There is the £600,000 sale of a prime site in the centre of the city, now being rushed through in spite of other professional estimates that set its value around the £5 million mark. The Labour administration is said to be "anxious", in the current financial year, to sell off assets and realise capital receipts".

Perhaps the most illuminating report of all concerns news of private development of Glasgow Green itself, where the People's Palace is situated. This ancient common land lies at the very heart of the city and has been sacred to generations of Glaswegians for some 1,000 years. Like the People's Palace prior to the advent of Elspeth King and assistant Michael Donnelly, the Green has suffered quite outrageous neglect for many years. In contemporary parlance this too is a "prime site". Glasgow District Council have it on the planning agenda.

The city is being run as though it were a public company having to operate in an expanding free market economy. Using vehicles such as 'European Capital of Culture Year' it is being made attractive to potential shareholders in line with its inevitable privatisation.

The good assets are exhibited while the bad assets are kept out of sight. Some assets have already been sold and others are being polished in anticipation, "Experts" are to be empowered "to get on with their job". Within the logic of this philosophy of government, local or national, there is no room for dialogue, the very essence of democracy. This is why the campaign in support of Elspeth King has taken such root. It is also why another campaign has now been launched, this time in support of Glasgow Green.

Alasdair Gray

A Friend Unfairly Treated

People trying to write true accounts (instead of entertaining stories) should first say who they are and what led them to write. I am a 55 year old Glaswegian who trained at Glasgow Art School and afterwards worked at illustrations, mural decorations, portraits and landscapes. I liked representing the people and surroundings I knew, and my work became known to people in my native city who visited galleries, though not much known elsewhere.

I could not always earn a living by visual art work, so subsidized it with part-time teaching and writing, but still had frequent money troubles. In the spring of 1977 I was phoned by Elspeth King of Glasgow's local history museum, in the People's Palace, Glasgow Green. She asked if I would like a steady job as Glasgow's first artist-recorder. Indeed I would.

The job of artist-recorder had been invented by Elspeth, and is an example of how she solved problems thought insoluble by former People's Palace curators. Since the First World War our local history museum had received no funds to buy new artifacts or paintings. It was funded through Kelvingrove Gallery and Museum, which had to pay the huge price of storing and conserving the Burrell Collection, so most of Glasgow's 20th century and much of its late 19th century life was not represented. But the Government had now started a Job Creation scheme to reduce unemployment, a scheme which would pay the first three months' wages of any worthy new job an employer proposed. On a 9 o'clock to 5 basis I made portraits of modern Glaswegians (some typical, some famous) in surroundings of their own choice, and painted cityscapes of buildings and streets soon to be destroyed or transformed. In return I had a steady income, a studio in a well-lit part of the People's Palace store, and a future for my work in a public collection.

The job also brought me companionship. The store was where Mike Donnelly, Elspeth's helper, assembled and cleaned stained-glass windows, ceramic panels, posters and documents he had salvaged from buildings scheduled for demolition. At that time a lot of Glasgow was being demolished. Elspeth sometimes gave Michael manual help with his salvage work, as none of their staff was paid to retrieve things from dirty, unsafe buildings. Neither, of course, were Mike and Elspeth, but being the only keepers of Glasgow's local culture they felt bound to do it. The things they salvaged were the core of important exhibitions, exhibitions they set

up at astonishingly low cost to the rate payer, as they had done nearly all the basic handwork and headwork themselves.

The store was where some of the staff had their coffee breaks, so of course I heard about the Palace and its problems: dry rot in the main structure, and leaky panes in the winter garden conservatory. The first part was administered by Kelvingrove Museum, the second by Glasgow Parks department. These made decisions without consulting Elspeth King who did not officially exist for them. She had come to the Palace in 1974 to assist the former curator, Robert Wilkie. When he retired she had inherited his job, not his title, so was never asked to official meetings discussing the Palace's condition or future. Newspaper reports indicated that the District Council were discussing a motorway through Glasgow Green which might leave the Palace awkwardly isolated. They also discussed a proposal to knock the local history museum down and put its contents in store until a better container could be made. One councillor suggested the People's Palace was in bad hands because a display of Glasgow stage comedy material showed Billy Connolly's comic welly boots - perhaps the councillor thought Harry Lauder's comic walking-sticks were devalued by the proximity. All this news disturbed Elspeth King, who was told nothing directly. She felt the Palace was in danger. She and Mike Donnelly identified with it and worked to save it by increasing the value of the exhibitions and making the place popular. They succeeded. Though a small local history museum it is now the fifth best attended in Scotland after Edinburgh Castle, the Burrell Collection, the Scottish National Museum and Kelvingrove.

In September 1977 I stopped being artist-recorder to become resident writer in Glasgow University - the Job Creation wage had let me live in comfort, but not repay debts I had contracted in the previous year. The pictures I had made were exhibited in The Continuous Glasgow Show of 1978, when my regular connection with those who ran the Palace ended as suddenly as it started. I no longer worried how Elspeth and Michael were managing, because news items and occasional visits to their museum showed they were doing well. I will summarize their achievements very briefly.

In 12 years she and her small staff put on 41 special exhibitions, most of it achieved through work with local communities, local sports and photographic clubs, local artists and local labour. Yet the People's Palace won the European Museum of the Year Award in 1981, the British Museum of the Year Award in 1983 and was a main feature in 7 networked television films. In 1987 when Ken Currie had become one of an internationally known group of new Glasgow painters he painted a history of Scottish working life on eight panels round the inside of the People's Palace dome, the biggest mural commission for a Glasgow public building since the decoration of the City Chambers banqueting hall almost a century earlier.

Elspeth helped make other local history museums in Rutherglen Park and Provand's Lordship, but the establishment of Springburn local history museum was perhaps her biggest outside effort. The curator of it, Mark O'Neill, was chosen on Elspeth King's advice.

But her main achievement was in the organisation of the Palace's permanent exhibition. When she took over it had all the interest of a gigantic lumber-room full of objects too fascinating to throw away but which no other public places could use: James Watt's pipe organ, Lister's carbolic spray, a regimental snuff-box made from a ram's head. The objects were not presented in a way which gave a continuous idea of Glasgow's history. By 1990 Elspeth had designed and set up a display that indicated the flow of Glasgow life from its religious, trading and industrial foundation to more recent times, and still she was not an official curator, but deputy to one who did not exist.

In the year when Glasgow became the (official) European Capital of Culture its council advertised a new job: Keeper of Glasgow's Social History, to control all Glasgow's local history museums, but especially "the very popular People's Palace". Responsible for the appointment was Mr Spalding, the new head of Glasgow's museum service. When asked if Ms King would not get the job automatically he said, "No jobs for the girls. We must be democrats and make jobs open to all." He appointed the keeper of the new little Springburn museum. This shocked Glaswegians who thought his choice was not democratic. If democracy means choosing someone popular and liked, nor even Mr Spalding, not even the keeper of the Burrell Collection, is more popular than Elspeth King, and if mere achievements are a qualification nobody can be better qualified for this job than she.

The stramash this caused in Glasgow's local government and press shows why after 14 years she is now deputy of a young man she once promoted. Though a member of no party she is keen on working-class life and history and a bit of a Scottish nationalist. She dislikes the sale of public property to private companies, and the leaders of the district council wish to sell Glasgow Green near the Palace to English companies who will turn it into a vast commercial leisure centre. Also, Elspeth is supported by very peculiar people: local poets, playwrights, and novelists, and socialists, anarchists, Tories (Scotland still has Tories), and 21 Labour councillors who have been threatened by the withdrawal of the Labour party whip if they speak to the press on this matter. It is clear that Elspeth King has no political sense at all.

Hooray for the hard-working, low-grade public servants who give the public a better service than they expect, and have no political sense. Our country is rotten with the other sort.

Freddy Anderson

The Culture of Glasgow

Generally speaking, and with some few exceptions, it is obvious that indigenous Culture in Glasgow is finding it a very difficult struggle to make its way.

Why should this be when there is a wealth of literary and theatrical talent in Glasgow, including its huge peripheral housing-schemes? It is my opinion that the authorities, for all their lip-service to Culture, are very wary lest they open the flood-gates in Glasgow to an immense popular Culture, not Hollywood, Broadway or London-based, that will sweep away within a very few years the hackneyed, time-worn ideas that have been foisted on the people by a servile, manipulated media-machine for decades. I also contend that this suppression and distortion of truth began in Glasgow at the end of the eighteenth century with the appearance of Robert Burns' works in the *Kilmarnock Edition*.

These poems of Robert Burns were such a powerful exposure of the wickedness of the Establishment that it sent them scurrying for ways to undo the damage Burns was causing. Burns received not a single review in any Glasgow paper for his *Kilmarnock Edition*, but two mealy-mouthed letters that might have come from Holy Willie's pen appeared in *The Mercury*, signed Amicus by an obvious denigrator of Burns. Such is how the authorities in Glasgow hailed Scotland's greatest literary genius ever. I would not choose to mention this, had, after the great *Edinburgh Edition* of 1787, the City Fathers and Chamber of Commerce tycoons repented. They never did. Burns presented such a challenge to their philistinism, hypocrisy and 'North British' servitude, that they erected the highest monument in George Square to the loyalist minion, Sir Walter Scott, decades before the pennies of the Glasgow people paid for the much lower plinth of Rabbie Burns on the grass verge. And despite their sustained verbal accolades to Burns every January, they are still unrepentant. There is scarcely a plaque in the entire city to acknowledge the twenty or so links Burns had with Glasgow.

However, the Glasgow Establishment's treatment of genius and truth extended far beyond Burns to include anyone who challenged their domination by wealth and power. It banned the local radical paper, *The Spirit of the Union*, and transported its editor in the hulks, in 1819. They gaoled Sandy Rodger, the best satirist in Scotland. His excellent work is still excluded from the school curriculum. James Macfarlan, whose gifts were

recognised both by Thackery and Dickens, lived in poverty in a Glasgow attic, died of T.B. when he was only thirty years old and was buried in a pauper's grave. Thus the Rodgers and Macfarlans were neglected and, in their stead throughout the whole of Victorian Glasgow, a lick-spittle, sentimental, pseudo-religious trash was foisted on the people of Glasgow in the name of poetry. Poetry was emasculated of its substance and strength and the rubbish published in Glasgow was a mere mockery of the real thing. All this happened at a time when Glasgow was rapidly becoming the greatest slum city in Europe. What you might ask is the connection between poetry and slums? Well poetry is the seminal source of all literature, and can evoke a powerful protest against injustice. But the purpose of a Culture controlled by the upper classes, who were prospering at the expense of the masses in 19th century Glasgow, was to stifle the literature of protest and encourage a petty literature, a literature of escape from reality. It did not enhance reality, it worsened it. The other 'escapes' were the wine and spirit 'palaces' and the music halls: there were churches in plenty to 'comfort' the pious. Schools and churches and newspapers combined to hide the facts and the real history of Glasgow from the people. A Glasgow person searching even today for a real history of his or her city is almost in the same bewildered state of a foster-child looking for its real parents. It is so well concealed. The 'masters' of Culture have done their task exceedingly well.

Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Grieve), the greatest Scottish poet in the two centuries since Burns, saw through the 'Culture Game' and called for a new alertness among the people both in politics and creativity. It was in the 1930s along with his literary friend, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, that the best Scottish novelist of this century matured. Neither of these exceptional authors had a smooth passage among the philistines of Glasgow. MacDiarmid's worldly circumstances were never very high and Gibbon's widow (Gibbon died in his thirties) was refused by a Glasgow publisher her offer of the second edition of that marvellous novel, 'A Scots Quair'. On the other hand trash like *No Mean City*, a slur on Glasgow, was being peddled in England in tens of thousands of copies without a chirp of protest from our City Fathers or our elevated Chamber of Commerce. This 'book' created the false image that Glasgow was a city of thugs, whereas in fact it was a city of radicals and trade unions fighting for elementary rights.

The real Culture of Glasgow has existed not in the upper echelons but in the heart of Glasgow among the tenement dwellers. These created the bands to lead the unemployed during the Hunger Marches of the '30s. It lay in people like John Maclean and the Clydeside Workers' Committee who defied both the Glasgow and the London bosses in the fight against War and the exploitation of the poor. This is the real Culture; though suppressed and hidden by the authorities it survived underground and was orally transmitted from parents to children from the early 19th

century in the Glasgow tenements. It was not from the teachers in the schools or the *Glasgow Herald* journalists that folk learned to seek out the Calton Weavers' grave of 1787 in Abercrombie Street, or the Sighthill Monument of 1820. It was from their grannies and fathers and mothers, cousins and aunts.

The real culture of Glasgow lay in the poets and writers like Sandy Rodger, James Macfarlan, William Miller, Joe Corrie; in artists like Harry Keir and Tom MacDonald etc., in agit-prop theatres like *Unity Theatre Workshop* and *Wildcat*. In recent days it has existed in the great rallies against the Poll Tax for culture too is politics. It exists in the proud defiant songs of Matt McGinn and Hamish Henderson and dozens of others. It lies in the growing fight against injustice imposed by a Tory-elected English Government in London whose laws are administered by a pseudo-socialist gang in the City Chambers and India Street. They have shrunk the noble Red Banner into a diminutive rose, as puny as their brains, and are hell-bent on shrinking socialism to the same size. Both the City Chambers and the Chamber of Commerce join together to perpetuate a capitalism that for all its braying over Eastern Europe's dilemmas is quite moribund itself. All of you lot will easily afford to see Pavarotti & Co but in spite of your ringside seats you are still on the periphery of real culture and you will ever remain so. For the simple reason that you have always regarded culture, and still do, as a commodity that money can buy. It cannot, no more than love or friendship.

J. N. Reilly

Four Nocturnal Songs

If anyone had told me, when I was a child, that I would be an artist, living in a tenement in a slum in the east-end of Glasgow, with a wife and son, I should not have believed them, but I would have dreamed of being an artist, and those dreams would have been beautiful, and I would have seen a crescent moon suspended above my lover and myself, clasped in naked kisses and sighs, swept by scented breezes and ineffable joys, and I would have wished to be an artist.

1979

this poem is
dedicated to
the boys on the corner
the drunk and his dog
chasing cars of a night
this poem is
dedicated to
the woman I hear laughing
as I sit in my bath
thinking of you and the little girl
this poem is
dedicated to
the junky who overdoses
in the next tenement
the old man hanging from the pulley
in a wistful kitchen
this poem is
dedicated to
the excrement I live on

the indefatigable apotheosis
of blood and love and lust
this poem is

5/1/77

time to love time
to kiss time is
time to fuck time
to eat time is
time to muse time
to grow time is
time to wonder time
to wander time is
time to play time
to piss time is
time to dream time
to live time is
time to cry time
to talk time is
time to speak time
to shit time is
time to laugh time
to laugh time is

5/1/77

Sometimes when I look at my son, or when alone
with my thoughts of a night, I remember that
the time will come when he will die. That his
mother and I shall probably die before he does
is of no relief, for think of his grief at our
deaths. That we shall not always be loving friends
and companions, wandering the seasons, our
delights and the madness of this world, alone or
together, solace to each other's distresses -
when slashed by adversity, racked by grief or
smitten by obscure melancholies - will indeed be
a great sorrow, and though I believe we are more
than flesh and blood, it is at a melancholy time

such as now, when folly lays its angelic head on
my heart, that I wish for a marvellous discovery,
or a miracle, engendering the immortality of the
flesh.

1979

Donald Anderson

Whaur's Yer Culture Noo?

Now that the cash registers have stopped ringing (for whom?) and Glasgow has to clear up the physical and financial mess, it is time for the city's loyal voting fodder to consider just what the hell they have been loyal to and where has it got them? Certainly Labour's agents in the trendy "Marxist" parties won't be going into the schemes to explain - any more than they explained to the Labour voters of Govan when their Garden Festival went and who profited from that? Culture for these Carnaby Street "revolutionaries" means other people's revolutions and other people's imperialism, such as Chilean folk dancers and "inter"national Great British Tokenism. Nothing wrong with that. But, if Scotland is to be the only country on the planet denied its own cultural and political revolution, then they know where they can stick their Peruvian nose flutes.

If this sounds a bit too Rab C. Nesbittish for those sophisticated white "left" settlers, then listen to what Jean Paul Sartre had to say about trendie Parisienne lefties/liberals and their "understanding" of native African Mediterranean revolutionaries in the colonies:

"... the natives don't give a damn about their support; for all the good it does them they might as well stick it up their backsides".

(For those who like footnotes: You'll find Sartre's excellent preface in *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon. A classic of third world politics.)

What a difference between this French philosopher and the "intellectual", "academic" political perverts of the British "left" who sneer at Scottish culture in the same manner as their colleagues of the Great British right. The Scots sycophants are the most grovelling offenders, hoping for a pat on the heid from their sugar-feeding boss. Try any London-based "left" group for a serious discussion on Scotland and watch the Great North British monkeys perform for their English organ grinders. Brendan Behan in *Borstal Boy* described the Irish, Scots and Welsh screws as trying hard to be more British than the True Brit English and this maxim is just as true for the keepers of our British "Marxist left" in Scotland.

I remember the "inter"national Marxist Group of the late sixties first colonising Glasgow's university bed-sit land, posing with intellectual wee Trotsky glesses and John (Vladimir?) Lennon caps, raving over tickets for the "Scottish" National Orchestra and the "Scottish" opera. Perhaps English Thespian accents made them homesick. They all knew where Indo

China was but none of them could tell you the bus for Drumchapel. To show their courageous solidarity with the Viet Cong they persuaded the local Woodside Warriors to vote for the Buchan protege and great "pacifist" Neil (Lord) Carmichael and led a torchlit procession through George Square, ignoring some of the natives who shouted: "Take the skwerr. The Skwerr. The Skwerr!"

Later, as would-be councillors, their North British clones went into Drumchapel to support the Great British Devolutionary "socialist" Donald Dewar, of Ross Harper & Murphy fame. Dewar was to claim that if Keith Bovey, the radical CND/SNP lawyer were to be elected, Drummy would lose Stephens Shipyard, Singers, Goodyear Tyres, United Biscuits, etc. Dewar was elected and Drummy lost Stephens Shipyard, Singers, Goodyear Tyres, United Biscuits etc., etc.

The Drumchapels were jerry-built by Labourites when hooses without culture was the vogue. Now it's "culture" alien and yuppy - before hooses.

I remember an "anti-capitalist" play, some (English) folk music and poetries in the Old Methodist Church Hall, now Maryhill Community Centre, during the miners' strike.

I tried to recover from the experience in the Clarendon Bar, down the road, and met my chance some elderly ex-Maryhill miners. I was enthralled by their memories of working-class struggle, of John Maclean and their knowledge of world affairs. And understood their perplexity at having to suffer "thae English social-worker and student-types boring everybody to death with what they perceived to be "workers' songs".

Well, Strathclyde University had done its damndest. And one day the proles will have their revenge for all its attempts to impose a bastard culture on its students. My own background as a factory worker, merchant seaman and "Poisoned Dwarf", guarding the Queen's oil in the Middle East, helped me resist the brainwashing and propaganda. Though it certainly didn't do my "career" prospects any good. The Treaty of Union, 1707, was the greatest thing since polystyrene breid. The Highland Clearances never happened and if they did, then you did it to yourselves and it was good for you. We "benefitted" by surviving in the colonies or the hell of the Clyde Industrial revolution along with the other hungry, ungrateful Celts from Ireland who refused to be Anglicised.

English Nationalists and Scottish sycophants controlled the courses and re-wrote Scottish history into a footnote of British history and culture. And the Brit "left" students loved it. Culloden, to them, was progressive and the funny tartans never existed. How a piece of cloth that never existed managed to be proscribed from 1746 to 1783 is just another Great British mystery.

The language and the music were also proscribed. The "war" pipes and clarsach, as a means of communication, were destroyed along with the culture.

Marx wrote in Capital of how whole Irish villages were cleared but in Scotland areas the size of German Principalities were destroyed. His "disciples", as ever selective in the quotation passtime, prefer to regard a whole people being kicked off the land into a black industrial landscape as "progressive" in that more proles were being created for the Great British State. Great stuff for spies behind the lines and the bastardisation of our culture, with their latter-day Harry Lauder, Billy (the Brit) Connolly, expert on excrement, Labour's Court Jester.

French Dragoons along with General De Lally's Irish Piquets and Scots Piquets in French service gallantly defended the Highland defeat at Culloden from Cumberland's butchers. Those in French service were treated as prisoners of war and given quarter. The Highland "rebels" were murdered or transported. Today Doo Lally's regiment, having taken the Queen's shilling, are the butchers - of Scottish working class culture - in support of the mass culture of London "developers".

Norman Bissell

Glasgow's Miles ... Out

This One's For Bradford

Framed
in Ashton Lane
outside the Chip

picture right
the rear end
of maroon limo
engine running
chauffeur waiting
in grey peaked cap

picture left
a mid fifties man
still smartly dressed
two small dogs
round his ankles
hand outstretched ...

begging

Glasgow's ...
... miles out.

Patrick McGuire, a freelance writer under contract to the Glasgow Festivals Unit and author of those big glossy 1990 throwaways, told an Open Circle debate in mid-November that he was "proud to have been part of the hype machine" which aimed to use the title of Cultural Capital of Europe "to attract inward investment into Glasgow".

He said they were selling Glasgow's new image "not the divisiveness" of the past which he called "grotesque" and he also tried to ridicule the idea of Bradford ever being chosen as a City of Culture.

What was most revealing about the attitudes of some of the "cultural workforce" who came along that night was that, like their paymaster Pat "milk it for all it is worth" Lally, they wrote off Glasgow's industries and

working class struggles and proclaimed culture as yet another commodity to be marketed and sold so as to help usher in Glasgow's 'post-industrial' age.

They seemed unaware that for over a century Glasgow has been a city not of one culture but of many cultures. Successive generations of Scots, Irish, Gaelic, Jewish, Indian, Pakistani, Polish, Caribbean, Chinese, African and other people have come to live and work in Glasgow (a fact which renders Patrick McGuire's comments about Bradford even more objectionable).

These people brought with them their labour power and had taken from them the surplus value they created in the city's factories, yards and workplaces. They came to this most proletarian of cities which had the worst housing, poverty, and ill-health in Europe and found, it being a capitalist society, that the prevailing culture was based on private ownership of the means of production, distribution and communication.

The ideas, values, attitudes and behaviour to which they were expected to assimilate have been those of bourgeois society and culture.

Those who came joined a huge class of people who had to struggle just to survive and who developed a rich tradition of struggle for economic, social, political and cultural change.

These included the struggles of the Calton spinners and weavers, the Chartists, Suffragettes, rent strikers, the shop stewards movement, apprentices and unemployed workers, John Maclean and other Clydeside revolutionaries and in the post-war period, those of engineering, shipyard, dock, postal, cleansing, fire brigades and council workers, together with seafarers, teachers, students, furniture-makers and of course our huge army of poll tax non-payers.

This history of struggle is what makes the description "Workers City" so appropriate. That name is also a statement of intent, since for it to be fully realised will require the workers themselves putting an end to capitalism and ensuring that Glasgow's wealthy spongers do a week's work the same as the rest of us.

Such a history is of course not "attractive to inward investment" and so the cultural miles better hype machine has to go into well-heeled action to suppress, distort and sentimentalise it.

The Culture City image they present us with is a false image because it highlights only one aspect of the totality and covers up the other harsher realities of life as it is lived in the city.

As such, it represents yet another form of idealism, in which culture, like some new-age religion, is to be worshipped by the tourist masses.

1990 is also a measure of how far Glasgow District Council's Labour mafia,

who have run the city for over fifty years, have absorbed the 'enterprise culture' values of the Thatcher era.

Having failed to defend jobs in Glasgow's traditional industries, these misnamed labour leaders want to replace them for the most part with low-paid service jobs. Like the new model Kinnock Labour Party they have been adopting Tory policies and in some respects trying to outdo the Tories - putting out 60% of the work of the city's parks department to private tender, introducing entry charges to the McLellan Galleries and 'Glasgow's Glasgow' flops and cutting 10% off all departments' budgets to pay for the Year of Culture.

The single-minded determination of Messrs Lally, Crawford and their hangers-on to proceed with the sale to private developers of one third of Glasgow Green in spite of all the opposition can only be because this £30 million credit line would help bail them out of the financial crisis they have got themselves into.

Another measure of the spinelessness of Glasgow District Labour group was the way in which Pat Lally was let off the hook in mid-November and given another three months to work on selling off the Green using a bogus straw poll.

It is perhaps of some significance that the traditional left parties and groups have been virtually silent on most of the Year of Culture issues, being prepared, by and large, to give Lally & Co. a free run to spend, spend, spend.

I was amused in October to see a poster advertising a Socialist Workers Party public meeting in Derry which asked, "Is there a role for culture in the revolution?" The speaker was Mike Gonzales who lives and works in Glasgow but who, as far as I'm aware, has never raised a cheep all year about the Year of Culture and the role of Glasgow District Council.

All the more remarkable then that our Workers City Group which was not formed till March 1990, and was intended as a means of organising an alternative series of Workers City concerts and events, has inflicted such political damage on the Labour traitors' traditional dominance in Glasgow. We have done so by uncovering the facts, speaking out and campaigning against the 'Glasgow's Glasgow' fiasco, the unjust treatment of Elspeth King and Michael Donnelly and the postponed sale of Glasgow Green, and their interconnections. As a glance at any of the five issues of the Glasgow Keelie will show, this has been done fearlessly and with not a little poetics in our politics.

One consequence of our high level of active campaigning which has been essential because of the policies and push coming from Lally's team is that much of the analysis and discussion of our alternative views of culture has yet to take place. The other reason for this has been the wholly bureau-

cratic and undemocratic way in which the Year of Culture apparatus was set up and administered in a way designed to avoid discussion of issues like "what kinds of culture?"

Who knows for example what was in Glasgow's submission to the EEC or who supported the Festivals Unit and on what basis?

Did any of Glasgow's people know that there was between £15 million and £50 million of District Council money to be spent and was anyone asked what their priorities might be for spending it?

Were any of the users of Strathclyde Region's services asked whether they thought £20 million should be blown on getting in on the Culture City act, including massive press and TV advertising, at a time when £21 million cuts this year and £42 million next were about to be made?

There is nothing "clever and classless and free" about culture. On the contrary it reflects prevailing class forces and, whatever the intentions of the artists involved, much of it forms part of the ideological cement which helps to maintain power in the hands of the few.

The bulk of the 1990 programme consisted of traditional bourgeois culture of a fairly unadventurous kind, such as mainstream opera, theatre, ballet, art exhibitions etc., by which means Glasgow was initiated into the international circuit of expensive leading artistes and companies.

Socialists of course have never been opponents of the arts and have always been in favour of wider access to the best that bourgeois culture has to offer.

A good example of our position on this is contained in our Open Letter to Pavarotti. Following the intervention of that well known Scotia Bar worthy, Bobby Clark, in our discussion of the famous tenor's visit, we issued 5,000 copies of our letter in Italian and English at the SECC welcoming Pavarotti, condemning the exorbitant ticket prices and inviting him back to do another concert for the people of Glasgow, this time for free.

Cultural activities of diverse kinds have been developing for many years in and around the city of Glasgow, mostly pioneered by unsung heroines and heroes who received little or no recognition, never mind money.

For example, the Glasgow Folk Festival of 1980 gave rise to Mayfest in 1984 and there has been a steady expansion of writers' groups, small theatre companies, artists' studios, magazines like *West Coast*, and multi-disciplinary networks like the Free University and Open World Poetics.

The 500 strong response to the Scotia Bar Writers' Prize and the quality of the writings in *A Spiel Amang Us* indicate the creative upsurge in writing which is taking place.

Even here, the 1990 "Writing Together" events, centred at Glasgow University and the Arches, in spite of the many thousands of pounds spent

bringing many excellent writers from all over the world to Glasgow, for the most part remained within the confines of the literary establishment with little living connection with the new vital forces among writers and their audience in and around the city.

Some of the other worthwhile events like the Glasgow Mela, Women in Profile and Sechaba have suffered from timing problems, events overkill and Festivals Unit bad planning. To the 1990 PR industry this didn't seem to matter as long as it was there in the glossy brochures and could be shown to potential business 'relocators'.

The cultural cowboys of the Festivals Unit have tried to incorporate as many of the ongoing artistic developments as they could under the 1990 umbrella by means of limited amounts of funding.

To their credit some groups and individuals have refused to 'take the money' and have survived and flourished anyway.

Still to be felt is the real damage done by the District Council's 'money to burn' philosophy, expressed in the big-spenders' league:

Lally's Palais: £6 million

Glasgow's Glasgow: £4.6 million and rising

Glasgow Cathedral Square: £3 million

The Bolshoi Ballet: £2.5 million

Sinatra: close to £1 million

Pavarotti: £800,000

Make no mistake, the people of Glasgow will be paying the price for years to come in cuts in council services and jobs and by the sale of the Green if they aren't stopped first.

The question of what kind of alternative culture(s) we are in favour of has still to be clarified and this should be a major priority for us in 1991.

In my view, concepts like the people's culture, working class culture or socialist culture are inadequate.

A people's culture begs the question: which people? The culture of ordinary people, the folk scene or the pop world? Obviously, there are great popular traditions and institutions we wish to defend and advance such as the People's Palace, May Day etc., but this hardly provides a sufficient basis for radical cultural development.

The concept of working class or proletarian culture also runs into similar difficulties in that working class ideas, attitudes and practice are heavily influenced by bourgeois control of the media, and by ruling class cultural oppression.

A socialist culture would only be fully possible under socialism which unfortunately does not exist anywhere in the world at present because of the economic impossibility of socialism in a single country. I'm sure we'd all agree that the bureaucratic norms of socialist realism are the last thing Glasgow needs, having suffered so much from the crimes of Stalinism as

it has over the years.

In my view what is needed are the kinds of culture which tell the truth about the world both natural, social and psychological. These could not but reveal Glasgow as a city of enormous contradictions, divisions and struggle. They would involve much more than the culture as spectator sport so favoured by Lally's pallies. They would be based in Scotland but draw on the most advanced ideas, experiences and artistic practice from all parts of the world.

All of the creative energies which this society has suppressed, stunted or misdirected would be released, and once released these could not but have the most powerful political consequences as the downfall in Eastern Europe of more powerful Stalinist regimes than Commissar Lally's has shown.

A revolutionary culture would have to develop in close interconnection with the working class which remains a revolutionary class within capitalist society. It would be developed by those who are workers and those who are not. Those interested in reflecting the truth in their art cannot but aspire to a complete and radical transformation of our society.

In Lewis Grassie Gibbon's outstanding essay on Glasgow written in the 1930s and reprinted in the first Workers City book in 1988, he went to Loch Lomond to get a more complete perspective on the city and what had been inflicted on its inhabitants.

I also believe it is essential to get out of the city whenever possible and to get closer to the earth, the sea, the hills and trees, rocks, plants and animals not just to put Glasgow in perspective but also for their own and our sake.

The Motherwell skyline on that happy day when Margaret Thatcher resigned is scarcely that, but it'll have to do for now.

The Craig

Four pillars
of thick white smoke
belching out
all day long
from mill
moulded steel blue
against a clear
blue sky.

Maggie's just gone
up in smoke.

The mill keeps
on working
day darkening
to deepest red
as sun goes down.

Where
there's smoke
there's hope.

Ned Donaldson

Homes for the Needy

This is a story about an event which took place in 1951, nearly forty years ago. Why do you think we should talk about this event so long ago? What happened on that day is significant to the present set up. Most of us who were involved are still living.

I would have to tell you the historical background.

In 1951 upwards of 5,000 workers mostly from building sites, some from factories, tenants associations, Labour Party branches, Communist Party branches and the Trades Council, marched to George Square in Glasgow on a cold sleety day and went on strike for half a day to demonstrate on the proposed sale of a whole scheme of houses in a place called Merrylee in the Cathcart area of the city. The fact of the matter was that the extraordinary scenes that happened on that day triggered off a campaign that lasted until May 1952. I will go on to tell you as much as I can about the details of it.

Now what was Glasgow like in 1951 as far as housing was concerned? There were 100,000 people on the waiting list, and, except for war-devastated Europe, it must have been the worst housed city and had been that way consistently for the last hundred years. Slum landlordism was rampant, sub-letting, miles of decayed and rotten tenements in the Gorbals, Govan, Cowcaddens and Partick. Tuberculosis rampant. I am talking about every fifth or sixth person at a certain age group either had a shadow on their lung or were going for treatment for this dreadful disease which was caused by bad housing. Other diseases were rampant, the situation was desperate. Yet in the six years after the war Glasgow Corporation, as it was then known, had, through their Direct Labour Department, only built seventeen thousand houses.

Incidentally, I might mention the fact that right from the end of the war there was an organised Squatters Movement. Not isolated families but squads of people moving into army camps, taking over old houses, taking over empty hotels. The situation was pretty bad.

The general political background was something like this.

After the war the Labour Party was in power for about five years. Churchill comes back with a Tory Government in 1951. The Korean War is at its height ... there is a general swing to the right in British politics and indeed international politics. The witchhunt is at its height, the left wing are under attack all over the world - anti-communist hysteria has reached

fever level. There are witch hunts in the trade unions - in the Transport and General Workers Union in particular who put a ban on any member of the Communist Party from holding office and this is at a time when the London Dockers were led by Communist Party members and the London buses were led by Communist Party people. Because of the building industry's circumstances, the big sites that went on during the war, the building of aerodromes, the huge armaments factories, Mulberry Harbours and so on, changes the whole character of the building industry. The craft unions no longer have the sway ... it is the semi-skilled and the general labourer who is coming in in large numbers. Now the reason why the capitalist class attack the TGWU in my opinion, is that they see this mass of unskilled labour as a potential menace and they have got to go for them. That is why there is a witch hunt in the TGWU in particular. The craft unions have taken a back seat. They didn't all go to the right. The electrical unions, in fact, were very good, they went to the extreme left. The miners, as usual upheld the flag. They did not tolerate the witch hunt. The building unions and the craft unions either sat on the fence or did nothing and I have spoken about the TGWU which is going to organise the new influx of unskilled and semi-skilled men into the trade. There is industrialisation in the building trade, factory building, prefabrication and again it is mostly semi-skilled and unskilled workers but at site level the unions are organised in something called "The National Federation of Building Trade Operatives". A convenor was now called a Federation Steward and there was a rule that said a labourer could not be a convenor ... I mean, how blatant could you get?

I have to describe the Corporation's own building department. This is a very efficient organisation. It is perhaps the most efficient house building unit in the whole of Britain and it is run by the workers themselves ... on the sites, more or less. It had been started in the 1930s by a Labour controlled Corporation at the behest of the unions who demanded that they set up our own direct labour department. Now the men have returned after six years of war.

Now to let you understand about this Progressive Party (that's what the Tories called themselves). They were elected in 1949, I think it was and they were in office for two years. They did not have an overall majority. In 1951 in the May election they had a very tiny majority and it wasn't a working majority. There are two people in Glasgow Corporation to this day (non elected people) and one of them was on holiday and they brought him back to cast his vote so that they could put the Tories back in power after thirty odd years of being out of power. One of the first things they did was to propose the sale of this scheme in Merrylee and you can think of the anger that caused amongst the workers. A very select leafy suburb near transport (the motor was not quite in at this time) ... Great! They'll guard these houses. They put the best tradesmen on them, they used better

materials than they did in Pollok or any other scheme. We know this. But, throughout Scotland the Tories are moving to sell council houses, and Glasgow is chosen to be the flagship.

Now I have to explain what that is about. These were houses subsidised by the Government to provide cheap rented accommodation for working people and they were going to sell them. At that time Weirs of Cathcart was near to that site and obviously people employed there and living in the slums of the Gorbals and the South Side thought perhaps they might get a house near their work, and why not? They are very indignant about this. They call a conference of all interested parties. A whole number of people, off the building sites and a Tenant's Association set up a campaign committee. The first decision we come to is to have this demo. The response to this is absolutely tremendous, particularly for the building workers. It's a cold sleety day as I said and the workers stopped at twelve noon. The workers from the east end of the city assembled at Cathedral Square and marched to George Square. We did not ask for police permission ... they were dumbfounded; the traffic is held up and chaos reigns. Inside the Council the discussion is going on. The Labour Party are trying to make speeches. They are ruled out of order.

The debate was lively enough - remember there's 5,000 people kicking up a row outside - and there is inside the Council Chambers complete confusion. It started when Councillor Mains of Hutchesontown wanted to speak. He was told the debate was closed. He refused to sit down and kept shouting over the din of the Progressives "Sit down" chorus that he represented a section of the community and he was going to speak. A young man wearing glasses who was in the gallery jumps up and yells; "I'm from a Tenant's Association and you can't vote now, people are dying from tuberculosis. If you vote on this you are condemning them to death. There will be thousands of workers demonstrating, nothing will keep them back." He stood for a minute shouting down at the councillors below him and gripping the rail of the gallery and holding on as two attendants tried to pull him away. Finally they were successful and he was pulled away as Councillor Main was on his feet protesting. The suspension was moved and carried. He left and was escorted out of the door by the attendants. The decision was carried by - I think - 48 votes to 47. Now that's the situation inside, but outside we have marched on to the Square and somebody said "You are not going to get heard inside. The Corporation will only meet one of the many applicants and that will be Glasgow Trades Council". But we wanted to be heard and we are barred. Someone said "Right Ned, have a go at the door." Now this is the highlight. There are 5,000 workers and they charge the gate of the City Chambers. There are only two policemen and an Assistant Chief Constable called Doherty at it.

A young policeman pulls a baton out of his pocket and attempts to wallop me across the head and the old Assistant Chief Constable knocks the baton

our of his hand and says: "If you hit him we're finished". I leaned back, the gate closed. Now Harry McShane criticised me for not going right through. We came back from the gate of the City Chambers and there is chaos in the square. Les Forster, one of the leaders of the campaign, jumped up on the lion. The reason he did this was to restore order. The policeman pulled him off the lion shouting "You are desecrating the lion". I said, "You must let him speak. If you don't there will be another riot." Les speaks from the lion and tells the workers to go to North Frederick Street where a platform is set up. I have never heard such speeches in my life. The speeches were made by shop stewards off the sites, by trade union officials, by women from tenant's associations. There was a woman there with a dead rat that she caught in her house that morning. There was another lady with a piece of stinking rotten plaster. They managed to get into the Chambers. I don't know how, but they're chasing councillors up and down the lobby telling them to stop their bloody nonsense.

After that tremendous day the campaign developed. There was a huge Labour Party rally in St. Andrew's Halls and the Hall was absolutely jam packed. The whole council is there, also MPs. They were saying just the same as they are saying today: Wait for the election.

A call is made from the balcony by Les Forster to black the site and pull the workers off it: that is the only way to stop the sale. The Labour Party do not like this and they walk off, telling us to wait for six months till the elections in May. Les makes another proposal to the meeting: that we march en masse to the home of Tory housing convenor, Mr McPherson Rait, who lives quite close by. McPherson Rait is the villain of the piece. Among our many posters we have a banner hanging from the balcony on which is displayed a huge rat with the head of McPherson Rait. Most of these banners and posters were made up and painted by Tom Cattermole, a navy and a first-class artist.

The campaign continues with public meetings throughout the whole of the Glasgow area and workers from the building sites are speaking at these meetings which had been organised by local Tenants' Associations.

There is another half-day strike and demonstration called later in the year. It was called by the STUC. This is a very different demonstration: permission has been asked for - it's all very official. The police are ready this time. The newspapers reported that there were hundreds of police in the quadrangle of the City Chambers. The Special Branch is there and mounted police. They are not required: it's not that kind of demonstration. It is a good demonstration but entirely different in character from the previous one which was spontaneous, militant, angry and therefore much more effective.

There is one thing which should be mentioned. The building department



gave everyone a xmas greeting in their pay packet, thanking them for all the good work they'd done that year and wishing them the compliments of the season. The workers treat this message with the scorn it deserves. Every single message is collected and delivered back to the head of the department and he is told what to do with them.

Another highlight of the campaign is a deputation from the city to the Secretary of State for Scotland in Edinburgh. He refuses to meet us and sends down his Under Secretary, the MP for Hillhead, Mr Galbraith. The complaint is listened to, he thanks us very much and says: "I will note it."

We had an impromptu march on the streets of Edinburgh which the police tried to stop. But the Edinburgh people were there to back us up and we held the march nonetheless.

The new year 1952 begins and the campaign carries on. But now victimisation begins on the sites. Myself, Les Forster and several other leading shop stewards are sacked. The official trade union movement give us no backing. We are isolated. I myself, as a bricklayer, could not get a job in the building department for many years, even although there was a shortage of skilled labour. I had to seek employment outside the city.

During the municipal election campaign the main plank of the Labour platform is NO SALE OF HOUSES AT MERRYLEE. They got in to power with a majority of 62 to 46 seats. The Labour Party in effect hijacked the rank-and-file campaign for their own opportunistic ends - as they always do. But of course the principle of no sale of council houses was established by the workers, and it took a vicious Tory government and an acquiescent Labour administration in the council to reverse it fairly recently.

If the lessons of the Merrylee campaign of the early 50s were learned today, then there is no issue which cannot be altered in favour of the working class. Direct Action won the day. It will again.

Ian McKechnie

Night Moves

I had seen the blaze,
negotiating the nightly way,
over waste ground,
between gutted houses
and the rusting hulks of industry.
What seemed a large conflagration
from afar
was but a small one
nearer.

Darkness destroys perspective,
and I halted of a sudden,
finding perspective
and children,
half-ringed round a fire.

Their suddenness and silence numbed.
The crumbling blaze,
fuelled from surrounding debris,
lit up sooty, sweaty faces
and glittering eyes,
and the only sound was of fire.
Sparks chorusing in thickened air
obscured what seemed oracular.
and I edged away as one in nightmare,
turning into sudden dark,
an after-image blinding,
eclipsing the way forward, through rubble.
My only reference,
the sound and smell of burning.

Robert Lynn

Do It Yourself

The leader of Glasgow District Council, Pat Lally, in his defence against the critics of the "Year of Culture" has stated: "What the critics have ignored is the fact that culture money could not be spent on housing. If we spent not one penny on culture, that money could not be spent on housing because that's the way housing finance and local government finance is organised. We are prohibited by central government from doing so." (*Glasgow Evening Times*, 6 September 1990).

Let this sink in, you potential voters and perhaps you will give a "do it yourself" movement some thought. Witness the present "anti poll tax" movement. Politicians can wait about the infringement of law till the cows come home. The people's common sense will prevail. Laws are changed whenever it is necessary to safeguard the status quo. When the people take action laws can be relegated to the wastepaper basket - as will soon be the case with the poll tax.

Jimmy Reid (the "champion of the working man" according to Marion Pallister in the *Evening Times*, 6 September 1990) is double dealing as usual. After his phoney criticism of Culture City on TV, he was quick to agree with Lally that the tens of millions of pounds spent on culture could not have been spent improving the housing stock and getting rid of dampness, etc. But what he doesn't say is why the people of Glasgow were not consulted before their money was put into culture. He doesn't question the secrecy of the City Fathers who are supposed to be acting in the interests of the electorate.

In effect Lally says: "You sheep may bleat, but we must act responsibly." It's a nice excuse. The more they rob us, the more responsible they become. These political manoeuvres by tricksters like Lally are not confined to Glasgow. They pertain throughout the whole country. When have the people ever been consulted about how public money - yours and mine - should be spent? Whoever heard of an MP making such a proposal? MPs are just tails wagged by the dogs of the civil service top brass who run the country on behalf of big business. Double book-keeping is as rampant as it is in industry. In 1953 the Post Office was presented with £75 million for capital expenditure on telephone, telegraphy and postal services. This sum included £25 million which was finally admitted under pressure to be part of the rearment programme. Mr Gammons, the then Postmaster General, revealed that this had been the practice for many years.

The Poll Tax was the brainchild of a Mr Douglas Mason. He has now quit the Tory Party and left us with the monstrosity. The Poll Tax was designed to give an extra boost to the policy of centralisation - more centralisation, more remote control is fascism creeping in with its slippers on.

It must be resisted. We must no longer rely on politicians. We must organise ourselves into "Do It Yourself" movements with the spokespersons being subject to immediate recall.

Between now and the next election think deeply about the system and how it works. Does it work for you or against you? What good has your MP ever done you?

Think of D.I.Y. It works.

James Kelman

Subjective Account

About 200 folk turned up. Mostly individuals unconnected to any grouping. Very few young folk. We took it to them by moving into the chambers en masse. Inside we were asked to wait in the lobby while discussion on East End Management meeting venue went on; the security staff were not 'empowered' to let us through and we were acceding to their authority. Eventually initiative was taken by among others Brendan and Janette, we just empowered ourselves, walked through and on up to the room in question. A good initiative this. It meant we were playing by our rules, keeping control. It's possible the body wouldn't have 'been allowed' upstairs en masse, for whatever reason or excuse. It gave us confidence for the stages to come - otherwise control could just have been handed to them on a plate.

Upstairs we were 'instructed' to wait by closed doors until the liveried staff could find out the score. Both men were agitated but firm; to have continued on then would have meant physical confrontation. The older guy laid his hand on my arm at one point and spoke of phoning the police; his taller mate was provoked by myself when I knocked off the older guy's hand and wagged my finger into his face, but he managed to avoid hitting me.

They made the mistake of going away altogether, probably assuming the authority of their position: because they had told us to wait it didn't cross their mind we wouldn't. Once they had gone we opened the door and continued through.

A liveried member of staff kindly pointed out the room. The East End Management Committee were already preparing for the meeting, so the room was selected by this time although that information had not yet been passed to the security staff in the front lobby. Knowing the procedure was so important here; not many of the public would have known which meeting to ask for, and the security guy would then have been less willing to give the information; it was the ability to ask for the correct committee meeting formally, showing authority to the guy, that got us through - Brendan I think has asked the 'right' question.

Again we took it to them by just empowering ourselves, and entering the room until finally the liveried staff caught up with us to put the block on. With Committee backing they tried to restrict the numbers of the public allowed into the meeting. We disagreed, insisted on full representation.

Eventually they conceded and the venue was switched to the full chambers. We followed without waiting for an invitation, walking as a body.

The committee were obviously nervous but responding in different ways; some such as Councillor Matt Adam were happy to show their contempt for the lobby even at this stage; others used a similar defence mechanism - a mixture of genuine contempt plus the need to put on a face to the colleagues at all costs. And that was prevalent right the way through the meeting. The need to save face and to intimidate the body of the people came out in smiles and nudges and winks and the occasional yawns etc. One councillor, a member of militant asked Elaine, "Who do yous fucking think yous are?"

At the door of the chambers the Committee Chairman asked for three representatives to speak on behalf of the public. He was given three names by those at the door. This was a body of people representing nobody but themselves, it was not a formal grouping of any kind. That point was missed by every official there. They could not seem to comprehend the possibility of individual members of the public coming together to act as they were acting. The idea that nobody was empowered to 'represent' folk seemed totally alien to any of them. The issue of spokespeople must be discussed more fully. It keeps cropping up in different ways and we have to prepare for it. Ultimately on this occasion folk just spoke anyway. Decisions obviously have to be taken by individuals at some point or another but they should be anticipated as far as possible.

The public were shown to their 'places' in the back and side galleries by liveried gents but exercised the right to sit in other places. The agenda was altered, item 7 became item 1 for our benefit. But was this for our benefit or theirs? Would it not have been an idea for some of us to have waited through the entire meeting? My own feeling is uncertain and for that fact alone I would have preferred not to miss what they said after we had gone. I think it would have been good not to let them off the hook, that we might just have given them the psychological advantage by making ourselves scarce. We would have made them even more nervous by staying till the bitter end.

Hugh pointed out at the opening that he was speaking for himself alone.

Perhaps there is a need to restrict the number of speakers, who knows, until the matter arises. But this matter was not being allowed to arise by the councillors. Their brand of democracy is geared to excluding different voices. Not everyone wants to speak in public anyway. And those who do usually make an effort to raise different aspects from previous speakers. When they don't they'll soon have it pointed out by everybody else. There was no way that the many arguments of the public could be 'represented'. For a start, nobody knows what these arguments are. The ages of the protest lobby ranged from about 5 years of age to 80 years of age. Who knows what they all thought. Once we had returned to the pavement

outside there was somebody amongst us said that we didn't want it deteriorating into 'anarchy'. But using language in this way is playing into the hands of those in authority, whether it be in George Square or Whitehall. As far as they're concerned the voice of the public is anarchy, and from here it's a very short step into talking about mob-rule and the need for what they call Public Order. In this context Public Order always means State Control - which was what had already happened since 50 or 60 of the troops were on the premises. Who called in the police is something we should find out immediately and make public.

If we don't want to allow everybody and anybody the right to speak then maybe we need to discuss what we mean by public protest. It was obvious that many folk didn't know the formalities of this kind of meeting - I'm one of them. I don't see anything wrong in it. Not everyone wants to know the formalities. Part of the strength of this group is exactly that, we play by different rules, we aren't controlled by their agenda. If the public weren't angry and emotional then they wouldn't attend the protest lobby. But part of these formalities is that you don't get angry and emotional. Public outrage is exactly what this kind of meeting is designed to suppress. It is public outrage that make folk like Matt Adam chortle with glee. I personally don't see anything wrong with the elderly woman who berated the councillors from the back gallery. Nor with the guy from Springburn who reminds folk that the actual pavements now seem to be the property of the building developers. We should never be tentative or embarrassed by folk who are emotional - leave that to the councillors and M.P's. As soon as we stop being angry it'll be because we've won the battle.

This battle is far from won. One thing required is a working definition of 'integrity' otherwise it'll be used against us. Also be aware that the East End Management Committee have only agreed 'unanimously' that the 'surface' of the Green isn't going to be tampered with. Where do overhead motorways and underground road tunnels come into it? Because it's a "Regional" decision what strategy should we apply?

Other points for future ref: workload needs to be spread. New ideas are all very well but it's the implementation of the ideas that need doing, putting the ideas into practice. Three or four folk are consistently doing the leafletting and posterling and putting the Keelie together and some other bits that demand time, eg. writing and gathering information, giving out information, talking to the media and so on and so forth. But maybe we should be looking at ways of spreading the work about, otherwise folk'll just get scunnered. Think twice before raising an idea if you can't attend to it yourself.

Very few young people are involved. Not many women. Should we look at that or not? Should we anticipate the need for spokespeople, maybe on a rotating monthly basis. Use our own meetings as ways of getting folk used to public speaking. If Workers City is initiating campaigns then

should it be looking at its own role a bit more thoroughly. How does this support group differ from a political party for instance? Is it feasible to initiate a campaign and expect a newly formed committee to act autonomously straight from the kick-off? It isn't that Workers City needs to keep control of any campaign initiated by them, but it definitely has to see that the new committee has a working knowledge of what's required, and if not then it has to be prepared to give assistance at a very basic level. To what extent is there room for expansion in the Workers City group itself?

A lot of problems are to do with organisation, rather than strategy, and this seems to mean the need for the kind of formalities we are suspicious of, maybe things like subcommittees etc, but we don't have to be scared by that, although it definitely pays to be wary.

endword:

I wrote the above account immediately after the demonstration referred to. Although it was a genuinely historic occasion I don't think this occurred to anybody until later; certainly not to me. At the time I did think it important enough to record quickly with as much details as I could remember. Obviously it's subjective. It's an account of how things went as I saw them, and some points I thought relevant at the time. I did it for the record itself and also that the document might be used as a discussion piece for the folk involved in the Workers City campaigning group. The discussion never took place - my own fault, I had passed it to Ian MacKechnie then forgot all about it. He gave it to Farquhar McIay who reminded me of its existence, and asked to use it for this anthology. I thought it best to submit anonymously. Farquhar thought it best I attach my name. I'm still not entirely convinced, but bow to his editorial judgement. I wrote the account in a oner and took pains not to revise it, without dwelling too long on why I thought that important, though I still do.

James Kelman
(November 1990)

Farquhar McLay

GLASGOW 1990

The Shameless Endorsement of Greed

Never before has there been so much talk about civilisation and culture as today - today when it is life itself which is disappearing. And there is a strange parallel between the general collapse of life ... and this obsession with a culture which has never coincided with life, and which is designed to domineer over life.

Artaud

Serious art and writing in the City of Culture has taken some fatal knocks. There is a poisonous something in the air, something very unpleasant and immediately perceptible, if not exactly easy to identify precisely. At least not at first, with so many pollutants in the atmosphere. The poisonous something is seldom mentioned in the papers. Nobody likes to draw attention to it in public: those who do are usually put down as spoil-sports and whingers - the latest Saachi & Saachi euphemisms for trouble makers and subversives.

For the festival director, Bob Palmer, and for the leader of the council, Pat Lally, the air is not only safe but positively beneficial. It is only a matter of becoming acclimatised. Writers and artists are invited to gulp it down greedily. A great many do, some holding their noses. That can be quite comical. Mr Lally says it is good for them. He says it is good for everybody, and especially the masses. Even if the cost hurts, rejoice! When it hurts it is doing most good. Mr Lally is a philanthropist in the Thatcher mould. When he is doing you most good the pain is excruciating. He will make Glasgow a Florence on the Clyde! The people will prosper. Anybody claiming otherwise is a traitor. It has become unpatriotic, as well as unseemly, to mention the smell. It is mischief-making even to hint at its origin. So most people stay tight-lipped and suffer it, just hoping for the best.

If anything as the year progresses the poisonous effluvia has only worsened. There are enclaves where the air is particularly noxious. And not all are convinced it is safe. Some have even fled the country. The rest of us have to make do with trying to avoid those terrible places where the disgusting miasma is known to be at its sickliest - like the arches beneath Central Station, or in Waterston's Bookshop, or at the Fine Arts Society and certain other prestigious galleries, concert halls, tram depots and theatres (like the Citz) too numerous to mention. In fact some people think

the only safe course is to go home and get drunk.

For the truth is: the Year of Culture has more to do with power politics than culture. It has more to do with millionaire developers than art. Hence the almighty stench.

For writers and artists in 1990 it is no longer a question of weighing up how much or how little autonomy/integrity to surrender for the sake of the grants or state subsidies or business sponsorship that might be won.

In 1990, willy-nilly, everything is surrendered, once you join in the enterprise, for above all 1990 makes an unequivocal statement on behalf of corporate wealth. So that in 1990 it is more a question of art sponsoring big business, promoting the new tourist drive and giving aid and comfort to a shallow ethos of yuppie greed. And for all this of course the people of Glasgow will be made to foot the bill.

At heavy cost to the public purse Glasgow's image is to be overhauled and tarted-up so that financial services can flourish, up-market shopping malls thrive and high-priced luxury flats proliferate to the glory of capitalism. It is the year of the exploitation of art by big business for big business.

In 1990 art is to pave the way for the entrepreneur and the property developer and the great new tourist economy and yuppie culture. That is the deadly fate political toe-rags like Lally & Co have earmarked for Glasgow.

With Saatchi & Saatchi's expert help they revamp the image and leave the reality untouched. They propagate an image which is false. There is privation and dereliction of the housing schemes, with a third of the whole housing stock officially classed as 'below a tolerable standard' or, as we used to say, perhaps more honestly, 'unfit for human habitation'. There is chronic unemployment and widespread DSS poverty with the usual concomitants - drug abuse and the manifold forms of community violence. This is not the Merchant City, but this is the real Glasgow.

Any image that fails to convey the social deprivation and human waste in Glasgow in 1990 is an insult to the working-class population. But a greater insult is the Year of Culture itself. For the people without a hope, it is the final proof, if proof were needed, of Labour's abject collusion with the forces of monopoly capitalism against the social and cultural aspirations and creative spirit of the working class - the final relinquishment of even the pretence to socialist principles.

Of course, if going home and getting drunk were our only option we would indeed be sunk. It may be one can have one's own personal revolution and renounce the shit that is being laid on us from all sides. But that is to be isolated, and to be isolated is to be sterile and, ultimately, acquiescent. A quietest rejection is not enough.

Better to stick our ground and make our protest heard in whatever way we can. Let us at least make certain they know we know the Year of Culture stinks - and why it stinks.

Jack Withers

Two Poems

Creativity in Culture City

(For the Glasgow-Rostov forum 27.11.89)

Glasgow:

Creative creatures here are nothing more
than mere clowns
at the consumer courts of capitalism
nothing more than other
flawed failures flitting about through

those formidable phalanxes of philistines
who control and cancel out any critical culture

yes jesters gesticulating
in jaded jamboree of jaundiced juvenilia
going nowhere
getting nowhere
for there are
too many corruptive and crawling careerists

and uptight jokey journalists
ruling the rip-off reactionary roosts yes

it's like this more or less
and even if we exclude the gutter-press
creativity here is not taken seriously
as we've no true tradition of
powerful political poetry
in our timeless history
of toil and spiritual poverty other than
the particular exceptions of say
McDiarmid, Henrysoun, Dunbar and Burns

but they're only taken seriously
by a paltry minority

yet desperately today we need writers who
are social engineers and political
planetary pioneers
taking us out beyond the narrow mumbo-jumbo
of petty and parochial
penitentiary Glasgow
perhaps to grapple with that greenhouse effect
and aye even in the comic nuances o' oor tough
and expressive local dialect

to try and articulate the apathy love and hate
o' the demoralized and hypnotized proletariat
or is it in fact all too late
and that it is man the disaster
and not the master of nature?
and that in microcosm in our materialistic world of capitalism
Glasgow's minute intellectual statement
is but one of perpetual shallow entertainment
rather than one of deep and vital commitment

a trip o' the tiny ego
through those souless deserts o'
genteel jailhouse Glasgow?

Fellow Travellers

In limbo in Glasgow, poised on an abyss, us
Blank-eyed strangers waiting for a late-night bus
Like so many sick zombies stuck up a cul-de-sac
Oblivious to the city's fading din and moon,
Aware that at any minute we could be under attack,
Midnight sounding like the tune of "High Noon":
But staring at the headlines of an early-morning paper:
ITS MAYHEM AND MURDER UP A CITY SKYSCRAPER
After a smoke-filled night between bar-mirror and chrome
Focussing on that same conundrum - Freedom, Us and Them,
Few facing up to what's so real and obvious -
A damp slum of a home out in some New Jerusalem
Can be awkward and backward as well as dangerous.

Oh yes, no bonus to all those who scurry to and from
To the continuous stress and business of the status quo;
Stunted are the minds that failed to grow
Pulled on long strings by those in the know.

And the smell of stale smoke that makes you choke,
That stink of dried piss from surrounding walls,
Some plastered bastard, diuretic and sick,
Has left us all with the smell of him and his pie-eyed pals;
A shiver, and ice-cold fingers creep up the back
As a dog out in the fog barks and howls.

So much time to think and to ponder
Never having lost that childish but not selfish
Sense of wonder, those continuous thoughts are ever
Being bitter and critical aware that the entire
Scene has become so mundane and obscene and apolitical -
Progress up the ladder if you're a cheat and a liar,
The class war for what it was seemingly no longer so crucial.

Yes, how they must also scurry to and fro
In Moscow and Chicago plus dear old Glasgow.

Shaped by hidden forces chronically out of kilter,
Alkies and junkies gather over by the hot-dog shelter,
No sense of time, reason or rhyme;
With cold eye I identify, so sober, with the poverty and squalor,

For I have been here before, a witness to crime
That brings only emptiness and no sense of release
As they're heading out towards the big housing-schemes,
Wastelands that echo with countless despairing screams.

Nowhere to go, nowhere to go
Other than to soar real high on the killer snow,
To hear the air hiss through your veins
A headache of crack round the bend up those west-end lanes;
Streets, precipices and squares, endless rivers of fears,
Fat cats like moles seeking blind bolt-holes,
Violence and madness on the increase,
Drastic disturbance of meaningless peace
When nothing any more is what it appears.

They measure out dream doses on blackened spoon
And warm them over a low-burn flame,
The anticipation of intoxication never ever the same,
Giving wing to the hunger within for crack, cocaine and heroin.

Cheap children of stress and rampant progress
Bred to bleed in an era of greed and push-button ignorance,
Potential burglars, sniffers and dope-crazed muggers
Wriggling in the motions of an obscene dance.

The burden of freedom confined in its own prison,
An earthly prize of paradise, a forgiving living heaven.
And fights through the long nights of the big bad city
No anticipation given to yet another murderous dawn;
Sleepwalkers unaware of the compulsive small-talkers,
Normality a seal of approval on a foul sea of humanity,
Neons with their cruel stare under an insane moon.

All is still ... my feet are getting chilled ... and
I shiver knowing that nothing can stop us growing old.

How futile it was having tried to change the world,
A prophet with his sermon all off pat, condemning profit and credit,
Mass and class still all to be reached and told
Of their revolutionary destiny as the articulate proletariat
In a war where no one would get killed;
Street-corner orator,
Fighter, pure agitator,
Dead urgent and strident

Worker now writer,
Arrogant but oh so innocent;
Wild child, illiterate youth,
On a well-beaten path of prescribed truth.
Now much older and perhaps wiser -
But what is happening to the climate and weather?
No breath, no breath, like some silent death,
No number on that chamber of Lady Macbeth.
It's as if we've been through nothing at all -
Coming to an end but without ever having begun,
A presence without any essence, having missed all the fun,
Sealed in the gravity of an eternal black hole
After a long flight without light from a nearby sun -
Holding on grimly to both ideal and soul.

So much seems perverse in this shrunken universe,
No sudden revolution, no utopian solution,
The ideal-full freedom-trains having gone into abrupt
reverse;
The masses broken and thrown into confusion
By the treason of the clerks oblivious to Marx,
Magicians manipulating through illusion and tricks.

It's all trash and hash in this big dirty city ...
Dangling on a string between myth and reality.

...

Aye, there's nowhere to go for me and you
Other than to sign-on after a wait in the long dole-queue,
Like robots lining up for a diet of dangling carrots,
Mere fodder for the controllers of the markets
and rackets;

Nowhere to go in macho Glasgow
Where the punters know nothing of Michelangelo,
Gauguin, Pushkin or Arthur Rimbaud;
But oh how they scurry to and fro
In a one-way ball game with no-return tickets -
Too many out on the sidelines left holding the jackets.

Bitter sweet and sour is the air of the early-
morning hour,
The gutter spilling over with crap and litter,

Remainder and reminder of the people's power
As once they take over it'll all get better - I swear,
By dint of intelligent evolution
Spurning eruption and violent revolution,
For they've had enough of slaughter and torture
Like the blood spilled by all killed at Stalingrad
In that world inflamed by the mad and the bad,
Aware perhaps that it was a lot easier to die
Once it had been branded on each mind that
ARBEIT MACHT FREI.

We're out on a limb, still with it all to know,
Having no stomach for the climb up to a higher plateau.

For the rabble seem only to scabble unable to climb
Perhaps aware as they are that most are living on borrowed time,
No longer adrift on that great Red Clyde tide -
It's feeling free on a sea of rising crime
No matter the social disaster and loss of pride,
With ghetto-blasters, junk, claptrap and jeans,
Impervious to the whale-call wail of cop and rock-pop sirens.

Here we go, here we go, here we go,
Win a watch at the bingo then shoot the crow,
Or watch the crap and pap on the old TV
Another instalment imminent for that ever-present HP;
Time is the enemy, know your foe,
And wait for that next visit by the CID - our KGB
Who forget all about etiquette
When one is deep in debt, for who is illiterate?
The cold-hate state or the proletariat?
Ears shut to those who now state that it's all old-hat,
And yes we would also love to be truly free,
The punter and the worker, that is, alias you and me.

For the struggle is still on, don't believe otherwise,
They'll call you a fool, they'll spin you a tale
That this is bliss, a perfect paradise,
See for yourself, use your eyes;
Don't be so fragile, develop a shell,
And suppress all those devious whats and whys,
For all is solid, nothing's going to fracture
As man is the master of dear Mother Nature -
His butler a bland monster from hell.

Yet the older you are the harder
It becomes to retain in your brain the meat of your dreams,
The sensation of creation, the ticking bombs,
The dying suns and restless calms,
That hideous waste and taste for murder;
Distress and chaos made to order.

...

Time hangs so heavy after a bit o'a bevvvy
And again I wait in that same old state,
Desperate to act and to participate ... But in what?
Seeking escape, an outlet, like some up-market Hamlet,
Whose principality revolves on poverty and property?
To join the con-men of Mammon who expertly exploit
And where the players are gamblers and nothing
is finite?

Where incest come with interest as do the queens
And those clowns with hollow crowns ... truly illicit,
Who ghost, fret and cheat behind silky screens -
But still lord it over the proletariat.

No way, no way, as they like to say,
For it'll be off with their fine heads come the end of the day.
To die? To sleep?
Yes, those who choose to act like so many sheep,
Woolly and in total disarray.

Forget about your debt, save your rent.
If your intent on being subservient to yon privileged crew -
County gentry and establishment,
And sadly there's such inordinate precedent,
So submissive and passive and seemingly content;
Who? That drugged and ragged vast retinue
Of clock-watchers and rat-catchers,
Carpet-baggers beyond all pest control,
Back-scratchers as well as stabbers,
Humble grovellers on the dole,
Drained and untrained, stoned out of their minds,
Who meander towards the counter with lifeless hands.

Deja vu? How true for it's the same old scene ...
Slow plod along a long road where men can be real mean;

I seek like-thinking friends,
To share all my fears and tie up the ends,
To rest my case on other grounds
And to have a go at truly coming clean.

The window reflects an anxious face
As our bus arrives at last at the terminus.

The system and scheme as always is quiet.
but treacherous.

Jeff Torrington

Swing Hammer Swing

Our car, a Volkswagen Beetle, was fairly going along, so zippily in fact that twice within a minute we'd overtaken the same hobbling greybeard. "You're fond of first gear, aren't you, Eddie?" I said to the driver, and old father time lolling there on the rear cushions like a musical coffin tinkled out a series of chimes which I suppose is as near to human laughter as any mechanical contrivance can get. Eddie, my brother'n-law, made one of his hrrrumphing noises. Wouldn't it be a pity if after a lifetime of hairshirting, hymnifying, and hallelujaing, St. Pete slammed the pearly portal in Eddie's face just because on a few occasions he'd indulged in the odd hrrrumph?

It had stopped snowing but now and then bright flurries of the stuff fell from humpy window ledges where maybe a bird had newly settled. Pigeons, beaten to a fine lead by hunger, flickered amongst the rusted girders of the railway bridge. Over there, still standing but only just, was the Brandon Snooker Hall. Dampness had laid a green baize on its bricked up windows: mosstalgia. Where were they now, those gallus geometrics whose wordless lectures on the properties and projections of the moving sphere had us leaning on the smoke in awe: Cuts Colquhoun, Spider Sampson, Skinner Murphy, gone, all of them potted by time, the fastest cue in town.

Fires fuelled by wooden beams burned in cleared sites. Rubble was being trucked from busted gable ends, and demolishers worked in a fume of dust and smoke. You would've thought that the Ruskies had finally lobbed over one of their big megaton jobs: streets wiped out, landscapes pulverised. On a gutted site near a fire that drizzled sparks on him a greybeard sat in a lopsided armchair, placidly smoking his pipe. I nudged Eddie, and pointed to the old guy. He spared the greybeard a cold glance then returned his attention to the windscreen through which could be seen advancing streets shorn of their pavements by the snow, and of their buildings by the Hammer. It's inaccurate to call them streets anymore for they looked like a series of bleak airstrips.

Most of the Gorbals had been levelled by now. Housing Planners had taken up their slum-erasers and rubbed out most of the people who'd lived there. Some original specks still clung to the redevelopment blueprints but these would be blown away shortly. In Scobie Street for instance some commercial concerns continued to function: there was Nelly Kemp's fag'n

paper shop: Joe Fidducci's barbering joint; the Salty Dog Saloon (my local watering hole); and Snug Wylie's public lavatory (Men Only) which stood out in the middle of the street almost directly opposite the Planet Cinema. The movie house was bracketed by the defunct O'Leary's betting shop and the derelict Blue Pacific Cafe, mention of which is made in local bard John Scobie's 'Ode To A Flea Ranch' where he describes the cinema as being "A crackit planet betwixt the deil and the deep blue sea..."

As the car continued on its way the bulky typewriter lodged in my lap dug deeper and deeper grooves into my thighs. Eddie Carlyle just sat there, his gloved hands on the gloved steering wheel. Bugs of melted snow glistened on his dark sombre overcoat and his tight shirt collar, as hard as cuttle bone, creaked with his every neck movement. Eddie reminded me of yon defensive guy in Chekhov's 'Man in a Shell'. Even his after-shave lotion had a camphorish pong to it, which is appropriate for someone who'd mothballed his life, who'd deprived himself of pleasure down here all the better to enjoy it in the sweet bye and bye.

The Beetle crawled into the crevice of a sidestreet. To our left shuttered warehouses and abandoned workshops began to pass, while on our right a pad-locked Adventure Playground could be seen. Within it on a sagging gallows a piebald tyre hung in a perfect lack of motion.

We came now to a thoroughfare that blitzed the senses with its sudden buzz and uproar. Here there were many shops doing business: fruitshops, fishmongers; banks, dairies, butchers. Above these thronged premises there were dental surgeries which shared their common stairs with tenanted flats from between the curtains of which faces could now be glimpsed. On the pavements, shoppers' feet churned the slush to a fine black mud. It was as if Cumberland Street had returned in all of its commercial glory. But, alas, it hadn't. This was in fact Crown Street, what remained of it, a barrier already collapsing before the Hammer's onslaught. There'd be no gainsaying it - soon from the sky there would fall a hard pelting of slates.

"That's it!"

I pointed to a battered-looking shop on an equally battered corner where old election posters hung in a dismal rash of unfulfilled promises (come back Alice Cullen - we need you now!). Eddie brought the car to a crackling halt in the gutter. He switched off the engine. Bright sparks of snow drifted by. In a shop window an xmas tree stood bathed in its sentimental fires. Cradling a huge Teddy Bear, swathed in a polythene wrapping, a man lurched past. He was doing the Boozers' Bolero - three steps forward on tippytoes, two back heavily on heels. Potent stuff this xmas spirit. Eddie, being such a switched-off cat, made a nipple of his mouth and milked titting noises from it.

A real Paradise put-down is Eddie. Imagine arriving up there, sporting your new wings and your 'Be a Harp Hotshot in Just Two Weeks!' booklet,

only to find the place stiff with Eddies!

I raised the typewriter from my lap a little and MacDougall, (the self-raising flower) who'd obviously been beset by castration fears pulsed with gratitude as my manly blood revisited him. 'He lives! Praise the Lord - he lives!' C'mon, now, show some respect. A most poignant moment in my life has arrived. I patted my old Imperial Fictionmaster. Sorry, pal, hate doing this but I need the bread. I wasn't coming the con either. The jingling mitt of xmas had me by the throat. "C'mon, you tight bastard, buy your wife a decent pressy for a change. How many wee bottles of Eau de Cologne d'you think a woman needs? Aye, mucho in needo I was.

"We've still the pram, remember," Eddie said.

We've-still-the-pram-remember ... Now, where's that coming from? What can it mean? Just a mess in a dixie, is that it? No, not at all. What we have here is a variation on those egghead puzzles where you're required to identify a concealed geometrical shape by co-ordinating the variant spaces. There's no lid-of-the-box solution here, everything's down to the manipulator's geometrical know-how. In other words, you've got to be hep with your heptahedrons, octohedrons, rhombahedrons, and all those other hedron cats. Likewise, to interlock the voids in Eddie's remark depends on a shared pool of familial knowledge. Given this info, everything soon clicks into place. Thus, we've-still-the-pram-remember, unpacks to read: "We'd best step on it for we've still got that pram to uplift!" What pram? The one being offered to Rhona and myself by Rhona's sister, Phyllis, and her husband Jack, too, of course. I was to uplift it from their place this very afternoon. At the moment Rhona is in a maternity hospital, prematurely, as it happens, due to an elevated blood pressure condition... Decoding of message complete - ends.

"C'mon," Eddie now urged, "move yourself!"

It's amazing how contact with his Nazi steering wheel - gloved or not - turns Eddie into an insufferable little Volkswagenfuhrer. It's like he's hooked a jump-lead into a super ego-booster. Exauto, of course, he lives a vapid existence, snailing along at the heels of his mother Letitia Dalrymple, Carlyle. When he's not doing this then he's slaving away in a textile warehouse in the despatch room of which he prepares for consignment parcels of cambric, organdie, buckram, tarlatan, and stenter book.

"Right," I responded, "get your arse roon here and haud the door. This thing's a ton weight."

Bugged by my tone, not to mention my language, he snapped. "This could've waited. I'm not a flipping taxi service. You do realise that I'd get" - " - time from your work? Aye, I think you mentioned it a couple hunner times. "I shrugged my shoulders. "Anyway, I don't see what all this hurry-hurry's about: Rhona's no due tae February."

He caught me adrift at the nets with a moralistic backhand volley. "It'd never cross your mind of course, that since her hyster - her operation,

Phyllis might get depressed by the very sight of that pram."

"Heavy, man."

His shirt collar crackled, at least I think it was his collar though it might well've been his indignant soul stretching its astral muscles. How godalmighty powerful he looked all of a sudden - like a thrush unzipping a worm. Jeez, look at the manly flexing of those throat sinews, and that chin sprouting from nowhere. To think that before he'd got into this *kinderwagen* he'd been a mere bachelor of twathood, a comma in a Scott novel.

"Heavy, man", he mimicked me. "What's that supposed to mean. Why can't you speak normally instead of ... of..." Normal words failed him. I got a zen buzz: 'Man who rides on Beetle should refrain from stamping his foot...'

"Eddie," I said, "get the door, will you - before my bastards legs drop off!"

The shop was crammed floor-to-ceiling with junk, every nook and cranny had been utilised to accommodate the domestic fall-out which had resulted from that most disastrous of community explosions - the dinging doon of the Gorbals. Leaving in their wake the chattels of an outmoded way of living, whole tribes of Tenementers had gone off to the Reservations of Castlemilk and Toryglen, or like the bulk of those who'd remained had ascended into Basil Spence's "Big Stone Wigwam in the Sky". To be found in this shop with its pervasive stink of timerot were their old zinc tubs, their steamie prams, their wringers and their scrub-boards, their quaint old wirelasses, wind-up gramophones, dusty piles of records, 78's, EP's, and LP's, twelve inch tellies, wally dugs, wag-at-the-box cameras, and speckled photographs scattered as far and wide as no doubt were the people they depicted, cartons stuffed with picture postcards, old music sheets, and books, hundreds and hundreds of books, every domestic prop you could think of, aye, and including not one but at least a half a dozen kitchen sinks.

Into this shop too, like so many stale pizzas, had tumbled wall plaques which showed every sentimentalised rural scene imaginable. Ours had been 'The Watermill' though its stream had been diverted after Da Clay'd vented his spleen on it with a flying boot (a great spleen-venter was my old man). The leader of the 'Ducks in Flight' had winged on for many a year with a broken neck caused by, who else?, Vic Rudge when he'd taken a potshot at it with his Webley air pistol. Those selfsame ducks might very well be here, as might also my old bike, a royal blue'n white Argyle with a wee kiltie on the handlebar stalk. With some rummaging I might even be able to howk out those stookie ornaments Ma Clay'd been so fond of: Boy With Cherries, for instance. Poor bugger he was always getting his conk knocked off before he'd a chance to sample the fruit. 'Tantalus' I'd nick-named him, being at that time a raggedy-arsed kid who mainlined on bookprint.

"Don't put it there - you'll scratch it!"

The typewriter, about to mate with its dim reflection on a dust-streaked table was hastily transferred to the lid of a travel-weary trunk. The shop's owner, a crabbit wee nyaff came over now and, looking aggrieved, rubbed a finger across the table's stourie surface. If I'd scratched it I'd make good the damage, he warned me, which was really rich considering the tabletop already had more scrapes and blemishes on it than there were on my Jimmie Rodgers record collection. Muttering under his breath he fixed his querulous glance on me. "You, is it? And what rubbish are you trying to unload this time?"

The old yap bent to give the machine the once-over. He poked at it with a finger, mainly in the area of the ribbon spools but never once pressed a key, which was about as nutty as buying an auto solely on the design of its ashtrays. He straightened. When he spoke his voice was loused up with catarrh and a crack ran through all of his words.

"What's this, then?"

When I told'm he snapped. "Aye, I didnae think it was for sweepin car-pets! But what'm I apposed to do wae it?" Again I told'm. "Buy it?" he squawked.

"I thought maybe you wanted it rebuilt."

"It's a fine auld machine," I assured him, then slipped in a quick commercial which glossed over the typewriter's crucial lack of the letter I. "I'll give you a wee demo if you like." Adjusting the creased sheet of paper I knelt beside the chest and briskly typed: "The fast brown dog jumps over the lazy fox... Now's the hour to come to the help of the party..."

"There, how's that?"

He shrugged his skinny shoulders. "Hanged if I know. Havnae got on ma readin specs." He tugged now from his pants pocket a hankie, so clatty it would've been the talk of the steamie. Raising the pestilent rag he proceeded to empty his brains into it. When the messy job was done and his sight had been partially restored he looked cross to find me still there. "Better chance of sellin a cracked chantie. "Who'd want a typewriter aroon these parts?"

What a question! A blizzard of authors was sweeping through Glasgow. To get into the boozers you'd to plod through drifts of Hemmingways and Mailers. Kerouacs, by the dozen, could be found lipping the Lanny on Glesca Green. Myraids of Ginsbergs were to be heard howling mantras down empty night tunnels.

"I thught maybe a ten-spot," I said, as in the classical manner I assumed the stance of the black-belted Haggler."

"Ten bob for that rubbish! You're off your trolley, sonny."

My Haggler-Master wouldn't be chuffed with me. Recklessly, I'd exposed myself to the Haggler's prime foe - the non-Haggler. Mindless of tradition, ignorant of the rules of engagement, the subtle testing of balance until the fulcrum of compromise had been attained, the auld bugger'd simply waded

in and fetched me a boot in the cheenies. Turning now he peered into the backshop gloom then shouted, "Alice, come ben a minute."

After a few moments a peely-wally lassie of around 14, a comic in one hand, a half-gnawed apple in the other, slouched into our presence. She wore a skimpy mauve dress and a nasty line in facial acne. There was a blue slyness to the eyes that slid from me to my 'fine example of British craftsmanship...'

"What d'you want, Gramps?" she asked through a gobful of mashed apple.

"You say you get typing at school? Right, have a bash at this thing, then."

She wasn't overkeen (me less so) but Gramps insisted. The girl sighed then placed the half-chewed apple on Biffo the Bear and kneeled before the machine. Very self-consciously she adjusted her skinny fingers on the guide keys. I leaned over her. "If it helps just copy what I've typed." But with a nervous gulp she began to rap out something entirely different:

Of all the f shes n the sea the merma d s the one for me.

She tried again with, of course, identical results. Next, with a glance up at me, she struck a rapid tattoo on the I key: the amputated leg kicked im-potently.

"Well?" her grandfather queried.

The girl rose. "It's alright, I suppose, considering its age." Her mouth sappy once more with pulped apple she turned mocking blue eyes on me.

"A pound," the junkman offered.

"A fiver, surely."

"Thirty bob."

"Four pounds, then?"

"Two, no more."

I sighed. "Okay, but it's daylight robbery."

The old man, still grumbling under his breath, creaked off into the backshop where presumably he stashed his loot. His granddaughter grinned at me then, pausing only to spit out an appleseed, said: "You'd better give me five bob or I'll tell'm..."

Underway again, if beetling along at walking pace could be called that, I'd to grin to myself at the recollection of Little Nell and her Grandfather. Smart kids around these days, real bright buttons. The background of the High Court seemed to have jammed but with a supreme heave the scene-shifters got it on the move and replaced it with the solemn backdrop of the City Mortuary. We came, appropriately enough, to a dead halt beside it.

"What's that ticking noise?" Eddie asked.

I glanced over my shoulder. The Grandfather clock lay as before on the rear seat, its white face glimmering and a long-ago midnight or noon caught in its clasped hands - the embalmer's touch. It was a gonner all right, had well'n truly popped its cogs. Family tradition has it that it stopped short, never to go again, the very night its maker, Granda Gibson,

took a turn for the better and was soon on his way to a sprightly recovery in the Victoria Infirmary.

Eddie was shaking his head. "You surely don't imagine that it's coming from that thing?"

I shrugged. "Why not?"

"Grow up. A box of junk, that's all it amounts to. Mother won't let it in the house. Don't say you weren't warned."

"How no?"

Eddie, bravely, and completely without an anaesthetic, studied his own reflection in the rear-view mirror. He plucked at his fat overlip, drawing it up to examine one of his yellowish incisors. They looked like old piano keys, his choppers did. Mercifully, he dropped the lid on them. "I'll tell you why not - because that chiming orange box is riddled with dry rot. If it's ticking then it can only be deathwatch beetle."

"Garbage."

"Agreed. And the same goes for some of that other junk you've foisted on us. Take that wardrobe for a start -"

"Dartholes. How many times have I -"

"Who'd hang a dartboard on a wardrobe?"

"We didnae. Some of my pals were hellish aimers. Take Potsie Green for starters: compared wi him Mr McGoo had six/six vision. I'll tell you another thing - Bless you!"

"I wasn't sneezing, I was going shhhhh..."

"Shhhhhh?"

"Shut up. I can still hear it."

"What?"

"Ticking."

His gaze swivelled suspiciously in my direction then homed in in the bump in my Marine Combat jacket. "What've you got in there?"

"A bomb."

From beneath the jacket I produced an alarm clock. It was a blue, malevolent looking job, the destroyer of a thousand sleeps: the thing had leapt unasked onto my person as I'd left the shop.

"Vicious looking buggie, eh? A double-action rouser. If you don't hit the rug after the first bell it pishes on you."

"For any favour!" A look of sufferance creased his lugubrious face. What was it with this creep? Wasn't this proof positive that I was going to change my ways? Hadn't I dumped the very machine that'd threatened to turn his sister's life into a fiction? Not only that, I'd replaced it with a clock - the symbol of regularity and responsibility. Come Monday next I fully intended to cease being Dr Munn's catspaw in his attempt to sabotage the National Health Service system by choking it with paper, lots and lots of paper: sick lines by the shovelful, first, intermediary, then with much reluctance, final certificates; rambling letters to hospital consultants

about rambling patients; x-rays which often not only failed to match the afflicted part but also the afflicted patient; and overprescribing on a scale so mega it must've been keeping at least a couple of pill barons in pink caddies.

My illness - a nomadic back pain (the malingerer's mate) eluded Dr Munn's perfunctory attempts to pin it down but the Health Board, really concerned about my welfare, summoned me to the cave of their resident shaman, a Dr. Sword, who while he was no great shakes with a scalpel was blessed with a magic fountain pen which in about as long as it takes to write 'Fit for work' could 'cure' even the most tenacious illnesses on-the-spot. His steely gaze had soon focussed on the source of my ailment. "About as classic a case of self-induced narcolepsy as I've come across," he told his assistant, a Dr. Butler (this duo became the infamous 'Sword 'n Buckler', the very utterance of whose names sent forboding shivers through the sub world of means testees, tribunalees, and appeals paneles).

The first painlets of my affliction were sown the day I'd been doing some mental grazing in my dictionary and came across the word 'sabbatical'. It seems that there's this racket pros and parsons are into which allows them to sod off from the state galley for a year or so. This is so that their mental and physical batteries can be recharged while they enjoy a little exotic nookying, surfing, or hand-gliding. Fair enough. Nowt wrong with that. But worra about the Wurkers? Nuffink doing; they were to remain unsabbied. Bloody liberty. Was I, the son of a dead Clydesider going to stand for it? No way, comrade! So, with the aid of that rascally old anarchist, Doc Munn, who willingly covered my trail with sick lines, I sabbied forth from my workplace (at that time I was a fireman on the railways) to give my braincogs a good airing.

Instead of indulging in some mild eccentricity like, for instance, trying to construct an atomic mousetrap, or to design a navel-fluff remover for blind persons, I decided to fulfil a long-cherished ambition - the writing of a novel. And, why not? I'd writing talent, bags of it. Hadn't my English teacher, Mr Ironsides, said so? No, as a matter of fact he hadn't. Ironsides saw himself in the role of a literary shepherd. He'd stand on the mound of his ego, ever-vigilant to preserve us from grammatical howlers. Using specialised signals, he'd send his dogs into the heart of a paragraph to snap at the heels of wooly adjectives, or to sniff out elipses and split infinitives, before urging them to drive the word-flocks into tight, pedantic pens where the casualty rate from suffocation was often high. Ironsides deprecated what he called my 'lone wolfishness' and he harped on about my vulgarities in matters of style: "I asked for an essay, boy - not a bill poster hoarding".

At last the traffic lamp close by the mortuary - the red nearest the dead - gave us the go-ahead and the snow-mottled traffic with a grinding of gears began to surge towards Glasgow Cross. From the verdigrised rim of

the alarm clock a tiny bug, a molecule on legs, had emerged. I studied it as it began an epic journey from twelve to six, its polar opposite. A time-beastie? No. Time-beetle, then? Nope. How about a clockroach? Bingo! Aye, a clockroach, a wee time-beastie that lives in a 9 to 5 universe. I felt chuffed. It seemed that I was still on the Muses mailing list. I glanced from the window as the V.W. chuntered up the High Street, the vestigial spine of ancient Glasgow. In a shop window a nude male mannequin was to be seen staring up at a silvery tree from the branches of which handbags and gloves dangled like mutated fruits. I must sort that away for the future use of. Aye, despite the loss of my I-less pal (I could still feel its tactile phantom pressuring my thighs) I would soldier on at the writing game. Those nerds who urged me to be sensible and not to strain my working class braincells beyond their inherited capacity, hadn't they heard of a jotter'n pen - the only tools required by a writer? A tannery jotter with all the arithmetic tables printed on the back cover, not forgetting yon stotting word - *advoudupois*! 'Said the yard to the mile - will you be gone furlong?' 'Agramme of arsenic is a killergramme...' ... 'Open your jotters and leaving a margin begin': There was once this deepsea diver who found a tenement building on the floor of the ocean. He went through one of its closes and came out into a backcourt where the calm corpses of housewives with carpet beaters in their hands floated around. Also to be seen was King Neptune having forty winks in a lopsided armchair.

Swinging to'n fro on the windscreen was a tiny plastic skeleton, one of those keyring curios. Eddie had probably hung it there to remind him of his mortality though one glance at his corpsy face in the mirror would've sufficed.

The car braked as another traffic lamp ripened.

J.E. MacInnes

Two Stories

Wee Peachy

I dinny mind my first love. I wis ower young and have had ower minny, but I dae mind the wan that gied me the maist actual physical pain. It wis comin' oan fur the summer holidays an' I must hae been fourteen an' I'd be jist at the en' o' second year an' still interested in academic things, still "quite good at the school," "wan o' the bright wans", but I had infatuation, a deep, and I knew, permanent and lasting love fur the art teacher - Wee Peachy. We a' loved him, the lassies in my class, but I knew that my love wis the best love.

We used tae huv him oan a Friday afternoon an' it wis summer an' it wis hot, hot, hot, an' because it wis his class, we a' dressed up, no' in the usual school uniform, fur oan a Friday we were that wee bit lax because it wis near the holidays, an' the en' o' the week an' the summer. There werny minny summers that I can mind as a wean that were hot throughout, yon sweatin' hot that you couldny dae onything, but this wan wis.

We were the academic two-language class and naebody had ever suggested that art could be a career, so we werny concerned wi' the shape or the line or the form or the light or shadows. It wis later oan in life we learnt whit shadows were. It wis later we learnt what the art teacher wis trying to teach us, but then the sun cam' beelin' in the windaes, beeking us.

I sat there resplendid in my hame-made blouse and my sister's stolen drindl skirt wi the belt buckle cuttin' intae ma waist, she wis always a wee skinny-ma-link an' I was a big sonsy lump. But maist uv o' I'd stolen her shoes. She hud left the school by noo and wis jist feenishing her appreticeship at John Brown's as a tracer. She wis in digs a' week but cam' hame oan a Friday evening fur the weekend and fur her fancy claes. I wis still at the school and still in the regulation clumpy, dumpy shoes an' I hated them. I had stolen hers. She wis a private kinna lassie an' no' that sharing o' her possessions, nae wunner, when ma big feet were gaun' intae her wee shoes, but I hud actually made a habit o' nicking these shoes on a Friday afternoon, so much so that they hud geen me a corn on each wee pinkie tae that gied me gyp. They didny hauf gie me gyp.

I mind wan particular afternoon, my socks, nylon socks, white nylon ankle socks, too tight and these shoes that were also too tight, an' ma feet

sweatin' in them, an' I couldny take ma shoes aff because Wee Peachy cam' tae ma desk to look at ma drawing. Noo, under normal circumstances I widda slipt the shoes aff under the desk and geen the corns a chance tae throb, but I couldny, fur it wis at the en' o' a long day an imagine, jist imagine if ma feet were smellin, an' he wid be sittin' there, nearer ma feet than me, an' he wid mibbe smell them. Oh, I wid die, I'd be jist black-affrontit.

So he sat there and he had his sleeves rolled up an' the hairs oan his forearm mingled wi' mine, an' the shocks ran up an' doon ma airm an' I could hardly haud ma pincil. He must hae thocht I wis a silly beesom, or mibbe he kent, mibbe it wis jist an occupational hazard wi' him, but I can mind yet the sun beeking in and the hale class comatose, and of coorse there wis aye a bumblebee banging its heid oan the windae, stupit enough to fly in an' fin' a big open windae and too strupit tae fin' it oan the road oot. I never could unnerstaun' that.

Hooever, there wis I, wi' ma hert gau'n like the clappers and yon anticipatory, beginning sexual stirrings that we didny ken were that. We were that young and uninformed. An' I could see the sun glintin' oan his lashes. They were quite dark and whin the sun hit them, they trapped a golden puddle in the curl and jist glintit at ye, and his face wi' the growth of his five-o'clock shadow hinting through, that made it that grown-up beside the soft formless faces o' the boys in the class, an' the hairs oan his airm minglin' wi' mine.

I never hud fun airms interesting but I can see his yet. He had quite a wee haun fur a man an' soft, wi' him no daein manual work, but it wis strong and hud knuckly knuckles, bony but wi' weel-kept nails. I'd never noticed nails oan a man afore, either, but my hale life wis jist this wan airm, wi' the hairs, an' the pincil wi' his deft strokes, where mine were a' watery and waffy, like ma legs at his nearness, an' ma feet wi' these corns jist gowpin' below the desk, and the belt buckle slicing my spare tyre and the sunlight splinterin' aff his lashes and the een oan him smiling at me.

Messages

"Now, remember," she said, "Go all the way up the street, paying out and on the way back down you do the buying. That way you don't have to carry the weight twice."

The elder of the two girls nodded, "Yes mum, I know, you say that every week."

"I've written the list in the order that you do things, take your pencil and tick off what you've done, then you won't forget anything."

"Yes mum."

"Have you got the shopping bag and the big basket?"

"Yes mum."

"Mind and put the eggs in the basket, not the bag."

"Yes mum."

"When you've bought the veg, if you've any money left, get some fruit."

"Yes mum."

The ritual was the same every Saturday morning, and while the girls looked more and more bored, every word was waited for, the familiar litany a prayer at the start of the journey

"Have you got a hanky, watch crossing that road and for the Lord's sake don't lose the money, it's all I've got."

"Don't worry, mum."

They left, the younger girl carrying the big red leather bag while her sister swung the basket.

They were a close knit family. Their father's quest for work had taken him to the north east, but his sudden death had left them stranded far from the support of an extended family. They had learned early to rely on each other and take responsibility where necessary but their mother's strength kept them secure enough to squabble incessantly when they were together.

They knew the routine. Into the Co-op at the end of the street to pay the milk, Ross's to pay the papers, a slow nosy walk past the huge queue for Munro's hot pies, into the rent office then pick up the single shillings for the meter at the post office and only then it was time to start filling the basket.

Most of the shops in the small town were family owned, narrow and constricted. Usually there was a counter on the right hand side of the door and the queue would form a U-shape along the left wall, round the end and down the counter.

"If there's a queue at the butchers you can go in and keep my place," said Mary with her fourteen months seniority.

"I will not," said her sister Betty, "just because you're feart to stand in about the hingin' corpses, I'm no daein it on my own."

Mary shrugged with what she hoped was a casual air.

"It's no that, it's just that I thought I'd get the bread while they still have yesterday's cheap and we'll maybe get a skin for a sweetie."

Her nine year old sister squinted at her out the corner of her eye, weighing up the truth of that statement and mentally running her eye over the penny tray at Angellini's cafe.

"Right, but you better be back for I don't know what to ask for."

Glad to escape from the moving mural of lop-legged lamb corpses.

Mary joined the queue at the bakers next door, pressing into the crush of soft large feminine bodies, listening carelessly to the intimate details of the lives, loves, finances and morals of those of the townsfolk who had rippled the gossip pond.

She never heard a full story because every time two women leaned close to whisper, she slid from between them to the other side of the one nearest to being served. Slowly eavesdropping and queue jumping, she made her way to the counter, got the bread cheaply and was back at the butchers in time to be served without having to stand along the hated back wall.

"I've only pullets eggs this week, lass. Tell your mum they're only one and six rather than half-a-crown, and I've put in the tail end of a bit of my own cold meat, maybe you can put it on a piece and have a wee picnic."

"Thank you very much, Mr Matheson."

That was lucky, she'd been supposed to go into the Co-op and buy some cold meat, but that wee gift would save some more money. They'd get a good skin that week, maybe enough for an ice-cream and a bag of broken biscuits at MacKenzie's at the end of the street.

Slowly they travelled down the street, following the list until they were at the last official shop - Macrae's the Greengrocer, Fruiterer, Florist and Market Gardener.

Mary loved this shop. It was always full of forbidden fruit. By the time she reached it her little purse was usually almost empty and the vegetables had still to be bought. Her eyes always scanned the shelves of fruit and marked the passing transient seasons. Her mouth watered over the rich red cherries for the short June fortnight they were available, likewise the strawberries, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates, plums and dusky shadowed black grapes which were all beyond her ken. Her fruit buying was confined to oranges, apples, occasionally bananas and even more rarely, pears. The knowledge of cashlessness had always been with her, she knew what little money there was, where and how quickly it was spent and she had already learned to temper her real wants, if not yet her dreams.

Sometimes in the fruitshop there were melons, huge yellow suns that shouted of another world, but they were part of a dream world she dared do no more than lift the corner of, so her eyes never lingered on them, they were too huge a concept.

"Come on, come on, don't hang about on the door-step, blocking folks

way, are you going in or out?"

The old lady with the deep basket on wheels, and the bent walking stick handle had no time for two wee lassies counting pennies. The girls stood back to let her in, smiling politely as they had been taught. Something in the pretty freckled face of the younger girl tugged at a memory in the old lady.

"Forgive a cross old lady, lassies. Here, here's sixpence, buy a sweetie for yourself and your sister."

She put the sixpence in the girl's hand and went to the counter. While they were waiting the girls counted up the money again, including the sixpence. They looked round the shop, their eyes having to do what their hands and mouths and noses could not.

"Yes girls, what is it today?"

The counter in the fruit shop was high and the assistant's head and shoulders loomed over it. "Just give me your list over and I'll go through it at this side."

The list was handed over and the woman worked down it, measuring, weighing, bagging.

"Give me over your basket and I'll pack it for you. You won't be wanting the tomatoes and the bottom or the tatties on top of eggs. Right, that's it, now it just says 'fruit' here. What are you wanting in the fruit line?"

"How much does all that come to?" asked Mary, the shopping money in her hand and the skin and the sixpence in the purse.

"Oh, I see," said the woman, thinking they couldn't count, "Give me over your purse and I'll tell you what you have left."

Her hand came over the counter and whipped the purse from the child's hand before she could demur.

"I hope you've got more than this, there's not enough here to pay for the vegetables."

A small hand stretched up over the counter with the rest of the money and a wee stump of pencil was plied rapidly on the back of a paper bag.

"You've got 4/10d. I've got apples at 1/2, 1/4, 1/6 and 1/9, wee oranges at four for a shilling and big Jaffas at sixpence each."

Mary turned her head to scan and choose the apples. A sign on a melon jolted her still.

"RIPE MELON" "ONLY 4/6d"

She was transfixed by the huge yellow enormity of it.

"Come on, lass, what are you wanting, there's others waiting."

"That melon."

She heard the voice, huge and loud and determined and was amazed to hear it.

The shop assistant wasn't amazed. She just lifted the melon down, pressed the end, nodded to herself, nestled it in the basket against the tomatoes, replaced the eggs and gave Mary four pennies back. Mary stood

speechless and immobile.

"Mam'll kill us, well, you," she heard Betty whisper, but there was none of the usual sibling gloat in her voice as she reached to lift the basket.

"I'll carry the basket," said Mary.

"I want to carry it."

"No, its got the eggs in it. You're too rough."

"You don't care about the eggs, you just want to carry the melon. You've had it, see when you get home, you've had it. You never even bought an orange. You don't even know if you like melon. Mam never told you to buy a melon."

Normally such provocation would have led to a bickering battle all the way home but Mary was wholly absorbed by the huge yellow heart of her shopping. The basket was heavy and had a long handle, and she had to hunch her shoulders up to prevent it banging off the ground. She held it in front of her, with both hands and turned her knees and feet outwards as she walked, shielding the fruit with her legs. Betty traipsed along beside her, still muttering and taunting and dying to carry the huge fruit.

"Stop a wee minute, stop. Put the basket down a minute till I feel that thing."

"Wait till we get to the low lane, to the summerseats and then we'll stop."

Mary sat down on the first seat, lofted the basket beside her and for the first time reached her hand out to the melon. Melons had always been so far out of her reach that she had never really imagined what they would feel like. She ran her hands over the top of it, round the ends and underneath, feeling the huge hard ripe heaviness of it on her palms before she actually lifted it. round the ends and underneath, feeling the huge hard ripe heaviness of it on her palms before she actually lifted it.

"Let me see, let me feel, let me hold it. I want it. What does it feel like, does it smell?"

Her sister's small hands pattered over hers, poking, prodding, taking, but she held firm and lifted it onto her lap. The outside gave no clue as to what might be under the hard skin. She lifted it to her face and sniffed - nothing. No citrus tang, no minty tomato-stalk smell, no crisp-perfumed apple. A small tongue peeped from her mouth and she licked it. Still nothing. She pressed her fingers and the end as she'd seen the shop assistant do, but the slight give told her nothing. Doubts stabbed her. What has she done? Could she take it back? No, not without a note from her mother. What would mum say. She was supposed to have bought the week's fruit and here she was stuck with this big clumsy tasteless heavy unwieldy yellowy lump. Maybe it wasn't a fruit at all, maybe it was like a turnip, hard all the way through. What if she had spent 4/6 on a turnip! She'd never get to do the messages again. She'd have to stay at home and polish the silver, brasses and cutlery, she'd have to scrub the hated concrete kitchen floor.

She slapped her sister's hand away, lifted the burden from her lap and put it back in the basket.

"Come on, you know what Mum's like, she'll think we've been run down"

"I'm going to tell. You think you're smart, buying a big melon. I'm going to run and tell mam," with that the little girl ran off, leaving her bag of shopping.

Pursuit was out of the question so Mary picked up the bag and the basket and reluctantly plodded home. She could see her house from the lane. There had been times in the past when her angry mum had been known to come and meet her.

'Please, please, please,' her brain said, 'don't let her come out, let her stay in till I get home and can explain. Just wait till I get that Betty, I'll pull the head off her dolly.'

Her mother met her inside the door.

"Give me that shopping bag. You shouldn't be carrying both of these. Oh, what a beautiful melon. How did you know my mouth has been shaped for melon all week? I'm glad I sent you for the messages, I could never have let myself outlay that much money. I haven't had melon since the day your father and I took you to the zoo before Betty was born. Tell you what, help me put the messages by, hang out the washing and after we'll go up the river for a picnic."

"Can I carry the melon?"

They didn't go far up the river and the picnic wasn't elaborate, bread, the cold meat, tomatoes, a flask of tea for mum and bottles of water for the kids.

They had a paddle, fished for minnows, catching the wee peenheids in their cupped palms, rolled down the hill through the inevitable sheep dirt and thistles but nobody was really concentrating, their minds were all fixed on the melon, safely under their mother's protection. They knew better than to importune her but she seemed to take an incredibly long time over her tea and cigarette.

"Would anyone like a slice of melon or are you all full up?"

Four small bodies ran to the blanket. The melon was balanced on a blue enamel plate on the blue blanket. It looked as if the sun and sky had fallen onto the grass. The children held their breath. Here was a whole new world on their plate.

"This is where you get your face washed," said their mother.

The children looked up stunned. Had they heard right? Had they to go and wash their faces? Where? In the river? Mum smiled.

A knife blade flashed in the sunlight. The hand holding the fruit steady paled to white as it stretched across the vivid yellow skin. A thin ribbon of juice followed the knife as the blade slid down one side to the base. The white hand rotated the fruit, keeping it closed, allowing no glimpse of the hidden centre. Down the other side went the blade flashed in the sunlight.

The hand holding the fruit steady paled to white as it stretched across the vivid yellow skin. A thin ribbon of juice followed the knife as the blade slid down one side to the base. The white hand rotated the fruit, keeping it closed, allowing no glimpse of the hidden centre. Down the other side went the blade, the thin juice following less eagerly now that it could drip out onto the plate. The fruit fell in two halves, the soft ivory-coloured seeds in the centre and the pale green flesh glistening in the sunlight. Another flash from the blade before it was cutting again and then again to make the quarter into an unbelievably vast eighth.

"Mary first I think. Tell us if you like it." Her mother held the plate out to her.

She remembered the solidity of the whole fruit, its weight pulling her heart with fear as she carried it home. She put both her hands out to grasp the slice. It curved out of them like a huge gondola. The other children watched her, their mouths wet and open.

She looked to her mother for guidance.

"In polite society you use a spoon and a fork and a little shake of ginger, on a picnic up the river, you just set you teeth in it. Go on," said her mother with a little encouraging smile.

Gently, delicately, almost regretfully, she sank her teeth into the soft moist flesh. The honey-sweet juices ran from the crushed fibre, into her mouth, out the sides and down her neck. As she dug deeper, sucking to avoid losing the sweetness, the upturned ends curved round her face.

"That's your face washed now."

Her mother's voice galvanised the other children and three pairs of greedy hands grasped their share.

Mary lay back on the grass. She could never have imagined such a taste or texture. With a smile as broad as the slice of sunlight in her hands she settled herself to making this first voluptuous pleasure last as long as possible.

Farquhar McLay

Working At It

This morning when I coughed there was no blood in my mouth. It was something to feel pleased about. But I was wary at first. In sickness we like to play tricks on ourselves, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. I'd have tried anything just to boost morale or maybe just to relieve boredom. Then again, perhaps the blood-spitting itself had been the real trick. It had been with me for a week now, and I was beginning to get used to it. The sense of personal catastrophe had worn off. Evidently nothing new or terrible was going to happen to me. Not this time round, anyway. Just another of those dreary interludes to be endured as best one can. One can go on enduring it or try kidding oneself out of it. And when I coughed and could taste no blood I thought I might be trying to kid myself out of it. Maybe I was pulling back on the cough, depriving it of the necessary vigour to fetch the sputum up into the mouth. I took the last of the wine, smoked a cigarette, and waited. Although my tongue tasted like all manner of filth, the unmistakable tang of pulmonary blood was missing. It was a good prognostic. I got out of bed and went to the sink. I began to cough a bit harder. Still no blood. I was cheering up. It looked like a reprieve right enough.

I could now go to the hospital with an easy mind. It would be all right to go now, now the haemorrhaging was over. I was coughing for real now with no staining in the sputum. I could go to the hospital now with a good grip on myself.

When the blood is running out of you it's another matter. You are theirs. I think of St. Francis kissing the leper. The medics like you on your back like that, all atremble, ready to submit to anything. Even a kiss will do. When Francis turned his back I'll bet she/he cursed his guts.

I only go near them when I know I have sufficient strength to walk away if need be. You should be able to hurl abuse at them when it's called for. I find it is called for more and more these days. Make them earn all that superior glory they float on. Mostly you're scum in their eyes, anyway. Don't be timid scum. Be upstanding scum. Better an ingrate every time. Make it ugly for them. That's your reality, that's your world. Insist on your world. A far healthier experience all round. It's a lovely feeling telling them to fuck off, you're going home where you'll live longer. And then you can laugh when they show their hand and turn nasty and make threats,

and you can walk away feeling good, feeling safe.

I was at the door of the Burnt Barns when Cecil drew out the bolts. I needed more drink to wash the shit out of my mouth. After a couple of rums the hospital idea went right out of my head. It was a nice sunny afternoon. I decided to take a little walk in the sun. I made my way down Duke Street.

When I got as far as the Labour Exchange I noticed that the main building had re-opened after a long refurbishment, and remembering how I needed a new signing-card, and seeing how I was at leisure, I went in. I was curious to see the improvements. At first sight the place looked so swanky I nearly walked back out again. The new white flooring was so shiny I felt ashamed to walk on it. There were nice white curtains on the windows. There was air-conditioning, or so I'd heard. I noted, though, that the seats were still bolted to the floor. I placed myself in a bolted seat at the front of a cubicle that had a sign hanging over it saying: ENQUIRIES.

After a long time a clerk came. He looked very mistrustful. He had the look of a man who was permanently engaged in warding off blows. He was approaching with sideways gait, as if to present the smallest possible target to his enemies. When he saw me sitting there he not only looked worried, he in fact flinched. Then he went into a kind of dither and looked right and left and all about him as if he needed some help. Then he pointed to the door I had just come in by. "I can do nothing for you," he said, "you're in the wrong place. You have to go to the Job Centre".

He kept well back on his side of the counter. Maybe he thought I looked desperate, one of the alienated and desperate who have failed to come to terms with the iron contrasts of life in the great city of culture, a madman, not to put too fine a point on it. Or maybe the fumes of the drink had wafted across to him. I suppose he knew a chronic broo-wallah when he saw one. Some of us long-standing claimants can be trouble. In Partick I once saw a clerk pummelled and throttled till the life was almost out of him. I had nothing like that in mind. All I wanted was a new signing card. A UB40. Fungoid growths were sprouting on the old one which was crumbling to dust in my pocket.

I explained these things in timid and deferential tones. The quaint and simple nature of my mission disarmed him. He turned a wee bit more of himself to the front. He could be agile too. He steadied his glasses and leapt into a chair. Brisk and businesslike, he shifted about some papers on the desk, and with a slightly pained look pounced on one in particular, crushed it into a ball and consigned it to oblivion. Somebody's claim had failed the test.

He looked up. He tried a smile which died after a short struggle. He took out a packet of cigarettes and started to smoke. From a filing cabinet by his side he drew out a brand new green and white card. He handled it delicately. "Actually," he said, casting a quick glance over his shoulder and speaking in a whisper, "you can forget the Job Centre. There's really

nothing there. Times are bad, I'm afraid, very bad indeed. But we do what we can."

I was pleased with him. He had the look of somebody I once knew. Who it was I couldn't quite get at first. At the same time I was certain I had not seen the clerk before, unless he was one of the old-time clerks refurbished along with the building. It gets wearisome seeing the same old faces every time I visit these places. It's a relief when one dies at his post or gets a transfer. I imagine it's a killer of a job. I've seen new clerks starting off, bright and crisp and perky, and in a year or two they're as mouldy and decayed as my old signing-card.

In large letters the clerk wrote DUP in the top left-hand corner of my resplendent new card. He kept the card in front of him, lifted his head back for a better view of me, and took a deep drag at his cigarette. His nerves seemed to have calmed somewhat. He seemed in no hurry to terminate matters.

"Been laid off long?"

"Oh, yes."

He shook his head in commiseration. He tut-tutted. "It's bad, I know, it's bad." He carefully replaced the ballpoint in an inside pocket. "How long?"

"A lot longer than some".

"Yes." He shrugged. "It's the recession."

"But not as long as others."

"No, well that's something. And sometimes it's as well to look at it that way. It's no good getting depressed about it."

"That's what I say. I don't want to get depressed and go home and shove my head in the gas oven."

"For heaven's sake" - once again the flicker of a smile breaking on the clerks' face - "you're still a young man. You mustn't give up hope."

He was struggling valiantly to augment the smile. It was uphill work. He had seen last night's telly. He had read the morning paper. The unemployed were taking to suicide in a big way.

"Look at it like this," he ran on, throwing out his hands and looking about him, "there's always somebody worse off than yourself. Just think of somebody. Somebody who hasn't got a hope. I'm sure you can think of plenty of people."

"That's true," I said, shuffling my feet on his shiny floor, "I was hearing about this man in Greenock. He's been signing on for forty-one years. Think about that. Forty-one years in the dole queue. That's like forty-one years of nothing. I have a bit to go to equal that."

The clerk was aghast.

"Forty-one years? But that's his whole working life."

"Aye, that's right. Can you imagine what that's like - forty-one years in the grubber? Forty-one years o being ashamed tae haud yir heid up."

The clerk was turning the idea over in his mistrustful mind. His nostrils

twitched. Long experience in the bureau had left him hesitant and wavering. You could see he was beginning to scent something fishy about the man in Greenock. Then he puffed out his cheeks and gave me a sideways glance.

"Are you saying he was never offered anything in forty-one years?"

"Well, I hear it's pretty bad in Greenock."

"I mean was he able-bodied?"

"So far as is known. Mind you, I didn't go into the whys and wherefores."

"It does seem a very long time."

"You think he was work-shy? A layabout?"

"Well -"

"Yes, well - just a minute. What if he was just ... choosy?"

"That's very often the same thing," snapped the clerk, a rather severe look shutting his face down. "We get lots of scroungers in here. There's a black economy, you know. Half the claimants here are moonlighting. We have to have a team of fraud investigators working round the clock."

"So it's come to that?"

"Indeed it has. It's very sad but that's the reality, let me assure you."

"Moonlighting?"

"We know who they are. We get hundreds of anonymous tip-offs everyday. I could show you today's list. We have about two hundred names and addresses already and it's not even lunchtime. And we're by no means the busiest office."

"No," I said, putting my pinkie into my right ear-hole and giving it a good wring, "I don't think the man in Greenock was at the fiddle. The way I heard the story, it sounded to me more as if the man had tried just about everything but couldn't get any kind of work anywhere. I don't know now if they said he had a trade or that. He was a Christian, though, and a teetotaler. It seems they had a bishop saying masses and everything. I mean Greenock's a blackspot."

"Well, right enough," said the clerk, relenting, "I suppose he would have to be a very exceptional kind of scrounger to hold out for that length of time. It wouldn't be me, I can tell you. I'd go mad first."

Then it came to me. I suddenly knew who he put me in mind of with his anxious, over-the-shoulder glances, and why I mentioned the man in Greenock, who might or might not have been an invention. It was my uncle Larry, and uncle Larry was as real as you could get. Uncle Larry's dread of eavesdroppers was manic. He only spoke in whispers, usually with his interlocutor pinned in a corner, and only the merest inch between rasping whisper and suffering ear-hole.

Uncle Larry had seldom done a day's work in his life. On the day I left school and was freed from one set of frauds and fakers, along came Larry with bodements of even worse evil ahead. He had brought with him an unhand-selled pair of dungarees which were still in the Greenlee's parcel as

on the day he'd bought them. - "Afore ye were born, son. Afore ye were born."

I remember that day very well. Uncle Larry put a hand on my shoulder and took me to one side. He had sombre things to convey which were for my ears alone. I was cornered.

"Like it or no, laddie, ye're a wurkin man noo, an I just hope ye'll hae mair luck than what I had. You're the breidwinner noo, don't forget, and your mother's luikin tae ye tae dae weel. There's nae use in me fullin your heid wi a lot o damned nonsense aboot what's in front o ye. Ships that saved the Empire and aa that rubbish. That's what they gie ye in the schuil but it's crap, it's aa crap. Never mind the bluidy Empire, you mind No.1. Ye hear me? No.1. Ye're wurkin for No.1 first and ayways. It's a hard, sair struggle let me tell ye, and whatever wee bit they gie ye you'll hae earned it. But here's a couple o tips tae steer ye right."

Everybody was laughing. This must have been part of the joke. It did sound quite funny.

"Never come ower tae onybody aboot what your pay is; that's between you and the gaffer, naebody else. Ay watch what you're sayin when ye hear fly guys slaggin the boss, for your words will be carried back tae him, stand on me. And mind ayways say YES SIR when the boss is talking tae ye, it's no pee-heein, it's just respect, and a wee bit respect costs ye nuthin. Never jyne in arguments about politics or religion - for there's gey few wurkin men understaun a thing abot the yin or the other. Keep yer nose oot o aa that stuff. And above aa, watch your time-keepin, for bad time-keepin is a sure sign ye hate your work. You heed ma words and you'll no go faur wrong."

And with those words and air of high solemnity, my uncle at last relinquished his grip on the parcel. It was an affecting moment. The first and only time Larry ever gave me anything in his life. They togged me up in the overalls like people observing a ritual. I had come of age. The whole family marvelled and clapped me on the back and said what a lucky fellow I was to be going out into the world with a boilersuit like that, after it had been tended with such loving care for the better part of a lifetime.

Everybody had a good laugh, even Larry was laughing. There were loud guffaws whenever Larry's admonishments were repeated - they seemed to be common currency. I myself laughed as much as anybody, inclining to my aunt Jessie's opinion that "there were some maitters that Larry wudnae ken a haill lot aboot."

And away I went on the Govan ferry, brimful of manly pride in my workman's togs, fledgling and unblooded though they were. It was a lovely feeling. This was the Clyde at the summit of its fame. The glory of the great Clyde ships. This was man's work. Nothing else came near it. It was the highest imaginable calling, being a worker on the Clyde. I felt it in my bones.

All other jobs were dreary and drab, dark maggot-holes for wasting your life in. The Clyde, like the Gorbals, had all the romance and all the glory. You took height and strength from it. And I had been invited to be part of that. And I was proud that day in my innocence.

But my innocence wasn't to last very long. It was soon dissipated in the terrifying reality. I had entered a bedlam of smoke, din, bad smells and gruesome toil. Industrial Clydeside was like a descent into hell.

The noxious fumes left me gasping for breath, and the evil smells made me want to vomit. My job was mixing asbestos, which they called "monkey dung" and fetching the stuff in two large buckets up and down a complicated system of ladders and catwalks to where the time-served men waited for it.

You never could get enough of it to them, or get it to them fast enough. All day long they screamed for the stuff, like a pack of hungry jackals. In a short time Larry's long-spared boilersuit was splattered thick with "monkey dung". My body too seemed to be polluted with the stench, and no amount of scrubbing could rid me of it. I very soon remembered No. 1. The Empire could sink in the ocean for all I cared. And my new status as breidwinner lost all meaning when I saw the miserable pittance I was bringing in. I began to keep my eyes peeled for a quick mode of escape.

It came after about six weeks. The apprentices' gaffer, a squinny-eyed little toe-rag the name of Ramsay, got wind that three of us were up at the forge taking an unofficial tea-break. The can sat on the fire, brewing away nicely, with the three of us huddled over it, puffing at dows and arguing about football - the only debate the dispossessed can engage in with an easy conscience. At the last minute somebody shouted a warning, and when Ramsay appeared we were all pretending to be busy at different tasks. But the tell-tale can still stood on the fire.

"Whose tea is that?" Ramsay bellowed. The rejoinder was off my tongue before I had time to think about it.

"Brooke-fucking-Bond's!"

The others turned their faces away to laugh. But Ramsay knew they had heard and knew they were laughing, and with those three words and that hidden laughter my career in industry was blessedly at an end. The invitation to glory had been declined.

Ten minutes later I was sailing back across the Clyde, a measly two days wages in my pocket. I promptly disburdened myself of the dungarees and plopped them into the river. The hateful things sank like a stone. That was a while ago, and somehow or other I have managed never to pull on a pair since. Not that it has always been easy. Over the years I have had to devise some ingenious stratagems to avoid them. Not like today, with millions begging for the right to wear overalls, and being scornfully refused. Thus far, although I've had a few close shaves, I've been able to keep life and limb tolerably intact without having to offer myself on the labour market as a

serious candidate for employment. I neither work nor want, as the phrase goes, and feel no shame in admitting it. I might in fact be a wee touch proud.

Believe me I do not hanker after wealth and luxury. In the way of living accommodation, all I ask is a bed and a wall. And in the matter of feeding, I have always thrived mightily on the simplest fare - things like porridge and spuds, lentils and sprouts.

Not that this started as a kind of morality. It was just what developed as I followed my best and my truest instincts with the utmost honesty I could summon. And my best and truest instincts are all for a quiet life, at a leisurely pace, in a sheltered spot undisturbed by the bossy and the meddling in whatever guise they may come at me. I am well aware it is far from an easy dream to make into a reality. But I have not yet given up trying. As to the morality of the thing, I believe I have at least as much on my side as the remote and exalted captains of "monkey dung" have on theirs. It doesn't trouble me one bit.

As I sat there struggling with the impulse to impart the little fable of the dungarees, trying to calculate the chances of a favourable, or at least only mildly abusive, reaction, the clerk, using both hands, pushed my new signing-card over to me.

"Don't be too downcast," he said with a sigh, "there's no need. Let me say it again, the recession won't last for ever. It's not like in the bad old days when we had these slumps that went on and on till we got into a shooting war with our trade competitors. We have the EEC nowadays which means the different nations co-operate more. Somewhere in Whitehall, and somewhere in Brussels, right at this very minute, there are people, people who know about these things, sitting round a table and planning the recovery. You mark my words, there's a boom on the way."

Here was compassion for you. And here was faith. He was smiling. The smile had at last come to life on his mistrustful face. He was seeing me in overalls, my peeces in one pocket, my *Daily Record* in the other.

"Mind you," he put in quickly, bending forward and speaking in a whisper, "you'll have to be ready for the time when it comes. We don't know the hour, we don't know the day, but be sure of one thing: it's coming. So get yourself spruced up. Keep yourself active. Get onto a training scheme. Or the Job Club. Or why not try for a place in college? It's never too late."

He leant even closer, his voice deepened. "And just think of the advantage you'll have when the jobs do come. You'll be 'way ahead of the others. 'Way ahead."

It was a euphoric moment for the clerk. He was in clover. He was a believer and he had a dream. At last he was smiling a real big smile all over his sick-haddock coupon. The palmy days would soon be here. Have faith. The clerk had delivered himself of the good news and he was in smiling clover. He was aglow. He would send me away happy, an offering to the

Lord of Labour. I was not the failed claimant in Partick doing his nut. I was the leper under the kiss. Yes - take the bastard by the throat and don't let go. Scream into his face:

"KEEP YOUR MANGY FUCKING BOOM!"

Or no, no.

I pocketed the card and got up. Somewhere a telephone rang and went on ringing. In the background I saw a line of desks with clerks and clerkesses leafing through files. The telephone went on ringing. Nobody looked up.

I took two steps back, unbuttoned myself and peed - peed all over that shiny new floor, peed till the clerk's bright glow and the light of the great new boom were all but extinguished.

Michael Donnelly

Erased From History

Alexander Rodgers: Poet, Orator and Radical and the Bridgeton Female Reformers.

When the recently executed Glasgow History Paintings by Ken Currie were first exhibited the artist was accused of creating a myth of a clothed-capped proletarian saga which bore no relation to reality past or present. Anyone even remotely acquainted with the literature would know that far from romanticising the past Ken was compelled by sheer embarrassment of riches to compress and select eight episodes, where eight hundred would have barely sufficed. We live in a time of sell out and betrayal, where elected representatives of the people publicly proclaim their shame for our "inglorious past" and prefer instead to play the sycophant to monarchs our ancestors strove to abolish while rehabilitating the reputations of some of the worst exploiters and profiteers of the past. Those who have participated in the current struggle to defend Glasgow Green from the claws of the developers will I hope take strength and courage from these two extracts from our suppressed history. Every step we have taken confers honour upon ourselves, shame upon our adversaries, and reaffirms that their struggles even in their current half remembered state were not in vain.

After the gradual demise of the Association of United Scotsmen in the early years of the 19th century, much of their organisational expertise was channelled into industrial struggle, playing a crucial role in the underpinning of Scotland's three major early Trades Unions, the Cotton Spinners, the Calico Printers and the Handloom Weavers. Political agitation however, remained a proscribed activity for almost twenty years.

It was not until 1814 with the end of the War and application of the spur of mass unemployment created by the disbanding of regiments that popular discontent with the political status quo burst forth. The first occasion was one of great historic and symbolic significance, the five hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn. On the 24th June 1814 several hundred weavers from the village of Bannockburn and the surrounding area marched to the historic borestone with flags flying and the words of Burns' long suppressed anthem on their lips.

News of this act of defiance with its unmistakable political overtones spread like a forest fire through the old west of Scotland strongholds of the

United Scotsmen. The difficulties encountered in Glasgow in 1815 and 1816 in attempting to stage a mass campaign have been well documented. The resulting mass meeting at the estate of Thrushgrove in October 1816 reclaimed the right of the ordinary citizens to free speech and ignited the suppressed forces of Scottish radicalism. One of the first leaders to emerge from that struggle was the weaver Alexander Rodger, who became the poet laureate of the movement and one of its finest orators. Several weeks after Thrushgrove he helped to establish the Bridgeton Reform Association which later became the Bridgeton Political Union. A radical reformer, Rodger was a regular contributor to Cobbet's Political Register and other radical papers including the movement's own journal "The Spirit of the Union" to which he contributed some of his finest satirical songs. In this speech made at the inaugural meeting Rodger reflects on the horrific poverty endured by the workers in the post-war recession.

Two years later the work of the pioneers had borne fruit and Glasgow stood on the brink of revolution as the workers prepared to risk all in an attempt to overthrow a ruthless and oppressive government. In that moment of supreme crisis a very remarkable phenomenon took place. All over the west of Scotland working class women and girls broke free from the dead weight of sexual and domestic oppression to insist upon and demand a role in the agitation. Their activities reveal the astonishingly effective propaganda carried out during the twenty-five years since the suppression of the British Convention. By means of underground literature in the form of ballads, chapbooks and pamphlets the workers of lowland Scotland had acquired a very accurate knowledge of the iconography of their Sans Culotte idols. In the villages of lowland Scotland extraordinary scenes occurred as female reformers re-enacted with considerable flair and panache, the formal processions and ceremonial of revolutionary France and linked them, as Burns had intended, to the words of his anthem "Scots Wha Hae".

Bridgeton, then as now, was in the vanguard and the account of their spirit, audacity and discipline in the face of overwhelming odds ought to inspire in us all a contempt for the mean spirited sycophants who now masquerade as labour leaders in this city.

A speech by Alexander Rodgers at the inaugural meeting of the Bridgeton Reform Association, held in the Relief Meeting House, John Street, November 8th, 1816.

"We cannot look around us but we see starvation, misery and woe depicted in every countenance; a keen feeling of what we have already suffered, and a fearful foreboding of what is yet reserved for us, tortures and distracts every mind. Markets are rising, winter is fast approaching and wages are so low that with all our exertions we are utterly unable to

provide for the exigencies of the day, far less supply ourselves with sufficient clothing to resist the rigours and inclemencies of the season.

It would be altogether impossible to draw even a faint outline of the thousandth part of the misery and wretchedness which exist at present in this once happy and flourishing country.

Only to enter into the cottage of the mechanic, once the abode of cheerfulness and contentment, and there you will see wretchedness in its fullest perfection. There, behold the husband spiritless and dejected, worn out with want and fatigue, toiling incessantly 16 or 17 hours every day, he earns about one shilling in all that time; on that he must subsist; himself, a wife and perhaps four or five children who are equally unable to work as want.

Behold the wife, pale, emaciated and heart-broken, dropping a tear of silent and bitter anguish upon her innocent, unconscious and half-famished infant.

See the other children, ragged and shivering with cold, huddling together round an almost fireless grate, and sending forth their heart-piercing cries for bread while there is not a single bite to divide among them.

Is this a fancied, is this a too highly coloured picture? No; it is drawn from real life, and the melancholy experience of many even here at present could attest to its truth. From what grand source can all these evils spring with which we are so dreadfully afflicted?

We are told from the pulpit, and very gravely too, that they are national judgements for national sins. I sincerely believe this to be the truth. I believe that we are at this moment suffering for the sins of apathy, negligence and unconcern, which this nation has hitherto manifested for its best interests.

It is now time for every man in the country who is not interested in preserving the system of corruption, to open his eyes to the real causes of all the sufferings and privation, which we have hitherto so patiently endured.

The Grand Cause appears to be the non-representation of the People in Parliament. Whenever a Parliament become independent of the People, (who are the basis of all legitimate power) it becomes corrupt. No wonder then that we have been engaged in such ruinous wars - no wonder that we have to pay such a load of taxes, to support such a load of sinecureists, pensioners and placemen; and no wonder that the nation now groans under such a burden of unsupportable debt, the tenth part of which would crush any other nation in the world to atoms.

Is the House of Commons as it is now composed the House of Commons recognised by the Constitution? Does not the Act of Settlement (which is an essential part of the Constitution) expressly declare that "neither place-man, nor pensioner, nor any person holding an office, or deriving a salary

from the Crown, has a right to sit in the Common's House"? And is it not a notorious fact, that officers both of the Army and Navy, and the Ministers of the Crown, are members of that House?

Either the Act of Settlement must be a dead letter, or the House of Commons is not the House of the People.

If we are still Britons - if a drop of Scottish blood still runs in our veins - if we are the sons of those "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled", then let us show to the world that we are as determined to resist domestic oppression by every lawful means in our power, as they were to resist the slavery laid upon them by a Foreign Tyrant. Our weapons are already in our hands, these are reason, truth and justice; and how powerful are these, even in the hands of a weak man? How much more powerful must they be, when wielded by a whole People, determined and ready."

Reprinted from the Glasgow Chronicle, November 1816.

The Female Reformers of Bridgeton

Glasgow Chronicle, 11th November 1819.

"On Monday last was celebrated, with unusual enthusiasm, the third anniversary of the Bridgeton meeting for Parliamentary Reform, held 8th November 1816. The present celebration was, I understand, originally intended to be confined to members of the "Bridgeton Union". But on Saturday evening it was resolved by the Committee of Management, to admit as many friends to the cause as the place could contain. This being made known on Monday morning, a host of applicants rushed in from all quarters of the village, for tickets of admission; and by mid-day about three hundred were dispersed of at the trifling sum of sixpence each.

At six o'clock in the evening, the company began to assemble, and continued increasing till after seven, when about four hundred were present. Many were denied admittance for want of room. Among the company was a considerable number of well-dressed females, which added novelty and grandeur to the scene. At seven the Gentleman who had been Preses of the meeting about to be commemorated, was unanimously called to the Chair; and the business commenced by an address from him on the purport of the meeting - the general aspect of Public affairs - the object of the Reformers - a recommendation to good order etc. and he concluded by toasting the "Radical Reformers of Bridgeton" and may the 8th of November, 1819 recall to their remembrance with the liveliest emotion of joy, the day which gave rise to the public expression of their sentiments.

This was followed by "Scots Wha Hae wi Wallace bled" from a select band of instrumental musicians.

Shortly after it was announced that a deputation from the "Female Reformers" were in waiting, who desired an audience of the chair, which being of course granted, they were ushered in amidst the loud plaudits of the assembly. One of them presented a beautiful flag to the Preses, bearing the inscription: "A present from the females in Bridgeton to the Union". The figures were on the one side a female addressing a young man "Go where freedom calls you", on the other a mother presenting her son the Bill of Rights, motto "For this your fathers bled; nourish it and cherish it". Another of the females carried a splendid cap of Liberty, which she placed with great gravity and formality on the head of the Preses, which he wore during the night. Both these actions were accompanied with suitable addresses from the respective females; the purport of which was an approbation of the proceedings of the Unions - an exhortion to persevere in their attempts to recover their just rights - and a pledge, on their part, of co-operation and support.

About eight o' clock the company were served each with a three-penny pie, bread and cheese and jugfulls of wholesome liquid from the crystal fountain; all spiritous liquors and directly taxed commodities being excluded."

James Kelman

Art and Subsidy, and some Politics of Culture City

Arguments against public funding of the arts in this society might well be logical but they aren't rational; and decisions to cut or withdraw subsidy are always political. Greed is the ultimate motivation. This is illustrated by the national government which pretends to various philosophic absurdities while doling out massive sums of public money to private enterprise. It applies also to local government. And in Scotland local government where it matters is not Tory, it is Labour.

What is happening in the arts is happening in every field where public funding is paramount, especially in those very rare instances where actual 'profit' remains with the public. In our society profit is supposed to be private; the ordinary public is left with the loss: thus questions to do with art and subsidy move rapidly into other areas, and 'profit' can be defined in any number of ways, eg. good health, a pleasant environment, efficient transport, a just legal system, a high standard of general education, and so on.

An integral part of the 'City of Culture' concept is crucial to anybody with the slightest interest in art, and I'm talking generally, not just about painting but literature, theatre, music: anything. It's the assumption that a partnership already exists between the arts and big business and that such a partnership is 'healthy'. It suggests a heady mixture of high principles coupled with 'sound' business sense. Business sense equates with common sense. It is implicit that left to their own devices those already engaged in the field are not quite up to the more mundane practicalities. Art doesn't just need the money it needs the thinking behind the money. Folk already engaged in the field might hold lofty ideas to do with morality, aesthetics, the human condition, and so on and so forth, but when it comes to making a thing 'work' they need help from more down-to-earth sort of chaps. Art is all very well but out there in the 'real' world it's a fight for survival.

The battle has been on for years, people struggling for private funding, trying to tempt open the sponsor's purse; competing with each other, some winning, some losing. The evaluative criteria employed by those in control of this purse are not known to myself. Predicting motivation is more straightforward. But it seems safe to suggest that the art most likely 'to win the money' will conform to certain precepts deriving from these

criteria and will be decorative rather than challenging. The work of an unknown sculptor, poet, painter, playwright or whatever begins with a handicap, as does anything too radical or experimental or in some other sense 'geared to a minority audience'. Like any successful product, a work of art should be acceptable to as wide-ranging a market as possible. 'Market' here means media-response as much as potential audience. If a subsidised theatre company or gallery or publishing house is doing its job properly - that is, acting in line with current philosophy - then 'sponsor-appeal' exercises an influence on how it commissions plays, events, novels, exhibitions and so on. In the case of theatre, for example, a company no longer approaches a variety of local businessfolk for various bits and pieces connected with the production itself; an initial cash injection is nowadays essential. Therefore the criteria of the market-place will come to form part of the company's own criteria for judging the worth of new work. Not the merit, the worth. Its value is determined by its potential 'sale' to the private sector. A 'difficult' play - or novel, or painting - is no longer a challenging piece of original work, it is one deemed worthwhile but thought unlikely to find major funding from private sponsors.

When a theatre company wants to produce a 'difficult' play but cannot entice a private funding body to help subsidise the enterprise it is left with a limited set of options.

Offering a 'workshop' production is one. This immediately breaks through the public subsidy 'barrier'. Any publicly funded arts body must abide by certain agreements, one of which guarantees the artist a minimum fee for her or his work. On a 'workshop' production the playwright has the freedom to choose either a token fee or else no fee at all. It further solves the 'union problem': the company need not pay its members to the minimum Equity rate. In fact, they need pay no wages at all, only expenses. A 'workshop' production offers not the ultimate exercise in cost-cutting, which is voluntary liquidation, but it does mean great savings all the same: no rehearsals, no set, no sound, no lighting. The actors wear their own clothes or no clothes at all, and stand on the stage with manuscripts in hand, doing a sort of performance reading.

Obviously there are drawbacks: nobody has the remotest sense of being involved in an actual play; and for the audience (who frequently have to pay at the door for the privilege) the experience is not quite as good as being present in a recording studio when a radio dramatisation is taking place. 'Workshop' is a way of paying lip service to original work and new writing. Few companies like doing it. And one which wants to maintain full production interest in a 'difficult' play can feel entitled to wonder if an element of 'script-liberation' would broaden its sponsor-appeal, i.e. can the manuscript be adjusted slightly to make it that bit less off-putting to the folk holding the purse. So as well as controlling initial decisions on the production of new work the private sector is soon exerting influence on

'script-development'.

What it comes down to is imposition, the imposition of external value on criteria that should be the province of art. The folk with the money hold the power. This is true to the point of banality for those writers, directors, actors and others engaged in dramatic artforms within film and television; and a short answer to the depressing state of affairs in either medium, where to describe current output as second-rate is generally taken as a compliment. The artists there have long since conceded control.

The one obvious, though seldom acknowledged, correlate of the shift from public into private sector arts subsidy is the increase in suppression and censorship. It's very hard to imagine a dramatisation of the offshore oil workers' fight for improved safety conditions being sponsored by one or other of the major oil corporations; as hard as it is to imagine U.S. corporate funding for a realistic portrayal of its entrepreneurial activity in Central America or the Middle East.

And oppression leads to repression; the situation where writers and artists stop creating their own work. They no longer see what they do as an end in itself; they too adopt the criteria of the 'market-place'; they begin producing what they think the customer wants. The customer is no longer even the audience, nor is it the commissioning agent of the theatre company, or gallery, or publisher; the customer has become the potential sponsor, the person holding the purse strings on behalf of private business interests. What the artist is now producing has ceased to be art; it has become something else, perhaps a form of decoration, or worse, just another sell-out.

People engaged in creating art continually make decisions on whether or not to continue working at what they do. Even where it becomes possible to survive economically at it. This is because the vast bulk of the work on offer is geared to the needs of private sector money. Such work is not only meaningless but often in direct conflict with the artists' own motivation, I mean political, moral, aesthetic, the lot. Some hold out by entering extended periods of 'rest'; others try for a compromise; they do the hack stuff and trust the money earned 'buys time' for more meaningful work in the future. But anyone who relies on the private sector for the economic means to create art, and continues to believe they are in control of the situation is very naive indeed.

Within the higher income bracket in this country many people express concern at the hardship endured by artists. They assume the group is part of their own and therefore empathise with them. 'That could be me', they think. Others from the same income bracket are not depressed, they take the more aggressively romantic line and accept the necessity of suffering for art's sake. They do not for one minute think 'that could be them' but believe in the freedom to starve. Members of either faction assume artists receive their just reward at some indefinable point in the future, in the

form of cash or glory, perhaps posthumously. If some artists never succeed in 'winning a reward' from society at all then they couldn't have been worth rewarding in the first place. Perhaps the work they produced wasn't very good. Perhaps it was 'wrong'. Maybe it just wasn't Art at all: for within these circles of conventional left as well as right wing thought the myth that art with a capital 'a' is both product and property of society's upper orders is taken for granted. They're always surprised by the idea of 'working-class' people reading a book or listening to a piece of classical music. The possibility had never occurred to them.

And there's another line springs from the same mentality, the opposite side of the coin, often thought to derive from a 'class position'. This one accepts the elitist myth wholeheartedly, and therefore denounces Art for that very reason, it is elitist; and all of those engaged in its creation are self-indulgent time-wasters, dilettantis.

Those who take this line will make a case for Agit Prop, or so-called Social Realism, or revues where every song, joke or dance is followed by some polemic or other, working on the same principle as the Band of Hope when I was a boy; they gave you a biscuit and a cup of milk but insisted you watch the slideshow about the missionaries in exchange. It never crosses the mind of the vanguard that people living in Castlemilk or Drumchapel or Easterhouse or Craigmillar might prefer a play by Chekov or a painting by Cezanne to whatever else is being forced on them. A case will be advanced by those and others for what is euphemistically termed 'community art', i.e. art of the 'workshop' variety; apart from administrative and basic material costs it is produced for virtually nothing, and helps keep idle hands at work - thus groups of teenagers trying to survive on no-money per week are given a tin of dulux and told to paint their face, or maybe pensioners are asked to write their memoirs which are eventually photocopied and stapled together, then dumped into the shredder when the next administration takes over.

In this past year in Glasgow conventional myths to do with art and culture and public funding and private funding have been given full rein. The concept itself, 'City of Culture', was always hazy, extremely dubious indeed. It had more to do with etiquette than anything else. But if boldness is one essential ingredient of entrepreneurial activity then those who decided to 'go for it' are champions of the new realism which nowadays seems to cross not only national but party political boundaries. What becomes clearer by the day is that both the adoption and application of the concept derived from another heady mixture: intellectual poverty, moral bankruptcy and political cowardice.

It might appear contradictory to describe such a bold and grandiose scheme as cowardice. We are talking about an outlay of some £50 millions after all, given in the name of art and culture, to entice private investment to the place.

But it was an act of cowardice. At national level Scotland is ruled by a minority party. The holders of municipal and regional office are elected by the people to offer some sort of local challenge to the Tory government. Instead of offering such a challenge our politicians have capitulated in an embarrassing, quite shameful manner. Instead of attacking the national government they attack the people. They are presently implementing policies of a sort no Tory administration would dare attempt this side of the border.

Over the coming years the cost of this one P.R. exercise will have grave repercussions for the ordinary cultural life of the city. The money must come from somewhere. Major cuts will take place in these areas precisely concerned with art and culture. The public funding of libraries, art galleries and museums; swimming baths, public parks and public halls; all will be cut drastically. In many cases such services to the community will be closed down and sold off altogether, to private developers, to big business. What has been presented as a celebration of art in all its diversity has become an actual assault on the artistic and cultural life of the city.

After 1990, beyond the servicing of visitors to the cultural complexes, there must be some sort of 'reward' for the people of Glasgow. No one can spend that amount of money and fail to buy something. But authentic benefit for the many rather than the few seems destined to concern art itself. And art is the product of artists. And so-called 'community art' is also the product of artists, that is, if so-called 'community art' is anything other than a necessary part of that foregoing elitist myth.

Art is not the product of 'the cultural workforce', a term I first discovered in the summer of 1990 and which seems to refer to those who administer public funding and/or private sponsorship for 'arts' initiatives', and gives rise to the peculiar notion that without such a workforce culture would not exist properly, that without such a team of administrative experts who operate on behalf of that heady mixture of public and private enterprise, art itself might not exist, not 'out there', in the real world, where life is a war and poor old Art, with all its high principles and quaint ideals, would simply wither away and vanish altogether.

In that so-called 'real' world the only real terms are cash terms. And the only real criteria are the criteria that set the conditions for real cash profit. Those who are not in some way or another funded by the Festivals Unit or District Council and insist on defending the 'Year of Culture' must face up to fact that within the terms of their own argument they are defending such glaring blunders as the Glasgow's Glasgow temporary exhibition. It is a measure of the repressed nature of this country that people who would align themselves on the left are still trying to do exactly that. They find it possible to accept the misconceived farce as an 'aberration', a phenomenon, somehow managing to ignore what has been public knowledge for at

least six months, that Ms Elspeth King and Mr Michael Donnelly predicted the outcome more than a year ago. They are further forced to defend inefficiency, humbug, hypocrisy, diverse victimisation and misrepresentation, not to mention financial dealings verging on wilful negligence if not fraud. They can accept all of this in some kind of half-embarrassed, patriotic high-dive towards a mythical general good, which if it doesn't exist has at least found a name, 'Culture'.

If there is an air of familiarity about the logic of their argument, recollect Lord Denning's suggestion that it was for the common good that innocent people be incarcerated for life - better a miscarriage of justice than that the fact itself should be admitted: nothing is more damaging to the Law than when it is not only wrong but shown to be wrong, not only wrong but confesses itself wrong.

The architects of the adoption of the concept 'City of Culture' were politicians and entrepreneurs; the politicians represent themselves as the public and the entrepreneurs represent themselves period. Cash investment in the city and environs was the primary motivation, as the politicians have confirmed publicly. There is nothing wrong in that as far as their view of the 'real' world is concerned, it is perfectly consistent. And also quite consistent to assume, given the criteria, that profit in real cash terms from the investment will remain private, that the costs and any ultimate loss will once again belong to the public. It is important at this point to distinguish between politicians and those whom they are elected to represent.

Folk who defend or justify the expense in terms of art and the cultural benefits to the public have no valid argument at all. If they manage to rid themselves of the criteria of the so-called 'real' world then they are left with millions of pounds of public money to spend on the arts and culture in this world. This world is different from that other world. In that other world there is only one set of criteria, designed to set the conditions for monetary gain: in this world - the one where art and culture exist - there are a variety of sets of criteria; they include the one mentioned, but also others such as the moral, the aesthetic, the humanitarian and so on. In Glasgow there are a great many artists and others already engaged in the field itself who could have made a job of that £50 million.

No one has to be opposed to art 'dirtying its fingers in the market-place'. Nor does anyone have to be in favour of it. The question is irrelevant. What is at issue is value; the criteria by which we determine merit. In the world of the 'European Cities of Culture' a work of art is judged by the financial expediency of big business.

The people of Glasgow - artists and everybody else - were presented with a fait accompli, by a partnership supposedly there to represent public and private interests. But in reality the interests were always private. The only surprising thing about the fact is that people are surprised by it.

Meaningful debate on the subject was never allowed.

This too should not be surprising. Secrecy, censorship and suppression are essential ingredients of the 'real' world of private profit and public loss. Nowadays this is achieved by open decree. Taking its lead from the Tory national government, local officials of the Labour-controlled District Council tried to suppress and censor voices of dissent. And when that failed they succeeded, to their eternal shame, in punishing those who dared speak out.

Contemporary government, municipal, regional and national, is rooted firmly in the structure of U.S. corporate business management. Those who should be our elected representatives and custodians are transformed into chief executives. At the highest level their power is centralised to the point of autonomy. They are no longer accountable to anyone. Our artistic and cultural assets, in common with our economic resources, have become their property, not to keep for themselves but to dispose of, and to dispose of entirely, as they see fit, to whomsoever they see fit.

The mainstream media and the problems faced by those who attempt to work within them while retaining a degree of integrity is much too large an issue to discuss fully here. But it makes no difference how good a journalist is if the work cannot be done in the way it should be done, if the values of the journalist are not only an irrelevance but a positive hindrance in the face of those who own or control the purse strings. Unfortunately many of those engaged in the field are so far repressed they have lost sight of the reality. When confronted by folk who persist in criticising certain aspects of society they cannot get beyond the criteria within which they themselves are forced to operate and thus, intentionally or otherwise, are forced to seek ulterior motive or personal interest where none exist. It has been interesting to observe the response - and lack of response - of the media in general to the welter of controversy surrounding 'Culture City', and how in some cases blame for the many disasters has been shifted from the actual culprits onto the people who have directed the criticism.

It is always easier to focus attention on a victim rather than seek out the cause of the violation. It is further true of this society that we make victims of people and then punish them for being victims, frequently by transforming them into objects of ridicule or even criminals. Those who attempt to defend the victims are then punished themselves; sometimes they too are 'criminalised'.

But whether we attack victims or defend victims, in a repressed society, we will do so by ignoring the context. If we go through the list of oppressed groups and communities of people in this country we see that our institutions are geared to punish them, and are being refined constantly to that purpose. We can attack black people or defend black people and somehow manage to ignore our actual institutions which are, quite simply, racist; they are designed to victimise black people. And whenever

somebody excavates a hole in some oppressive legislation or other a government expert is sitting about waiting to pour in a ton of concrete. The current situation in Southall, London is a prime example; here a body of folk - the local Monitoring Group - exist solely to aid and support victims of racist violation, which includes murder; they themselves are being punished, and criminalised. Their public subsidy has now been withdrawn; they are repeatedly harassed and intimidated in one form or another, by the Forces of that Law and Order so beloved by the likes of Lord Denning. Their aims and objectives have been distorted and misrepresented in one way or another by a majority of the mainstream media.

We can attack or defend folk claiming income support and ignore the insitutions of the country which are designed to punish them further. And we can then find ways of attacking those who go to their aid, whether individuals or even official organisations connected to the social services. Anyone who signally highlights the plight of society's victims is guilty, in the eyes of those who control society; they are guilty of implying a cause of the violation. The most straightforward method of punishment is the slow withdrawal of public funding. The cost-cutting exercises then begin. The service provided to the victims is eroded until eventually the entire edifice collapses. As with subsidised theatre companies and other arts' bodies this can lead to the drive for private funding - which at this stage is classified as 'charity' within the criteria of the 'real' world; in the event of a total sell-out it may be described as 'privatisation'. But if we are talking about a service for the people then normally it just becomes absent, it ceases to exist.

A few older, liberal-minded folk still maintain that An Age of Liberalism existed from a point in the mid 1960's until a point in the early 1970's. I'm speaking of the arts in particular although some might want to generalise. In either case it may or may not be true. It probably is true for those who assume that the British Broadcasting Corporation was once an authentic instrument for freedom. But in present day Scotland, as elsewhere in Britain and most of the so-called 'free world', it isn't art and big business that are close allies, it's art and subversion; the notion that creative endeavour has a right to public - let alone private - subsidy is not a paradox, it is a straightforward contradiction.

This derives from the introduction to my forthcoming collection of plays, *Hardie and Baird: the last days*.

James D. Young

The May Day Celebrations in Scotland

I

Before the advent of the Second International in 1889, socialists throughout the world celebrated the Paris Commune as the most sacred and the most holy day in the calendar of international labour.¹ Although the martyrs and fugitives of the Paris Commune were not forgotten after the foundation of the Second International, socialists increasingly focussed on May Day as the most important celebratory event in the litany of **labour's** communion with and struggle against **capital**.

Nevertheless there were important differences in the celebration of May Day on the Continent and in Britain during the heyday of the Second International between 1890 and 1914. Despite Frederick Engels's ecstatic enthusiasm for the gigantic May Day procession in London in 1890, the British socialists were - and remained - more 'backward' than their Continental counterparts in their celebration of May Day. In discussing this difference in the celebration of May Day or in Britain 'Labour Day', Julian Braunthal noted that:

"The French and Austrians decided to celebrate 1 May with a general strike, the Germans and British by holding mass meetings on the first Sunday in May and the parties of most other countries with meetings on the evening of the first of May".² But in the 1980s the workers' movement in Britain often celebrated May Day on the first Saturday, not the first Sunday in May. This was to avoid the odium of antagonising the upholders of Sabbatarianism.

Unlike the English, the Scots were unhappy from the very beginning with the decision to celebrate May Day on the first Sunday of the month instead of the actual 1 May. But, although support for the May Day celebrations did not develop so rapidly in Scotland as in England, the Scottish socialists, though numerically smaller in relation to population size, became more conscious from the mid-1890s of being out of step with most of their comrades on the Continent. With a smaller workers' movement than existed in England, the Left in Scotland could exert more influence on the workers. Alongside the celebration of May Day in the Scotland of the 1890s, however, the Scots did not neglect to celebrate the Paris Commune as the first example of workers' power in practice.³

In any warts-and-all history of the British labour movement, the advent

of 'the Fourth of May Demonstration' was a landmark in the growth of the idea of workers' international solidarity. As H.M. Hyndman, the leader of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) wrote:

"London, the metropolis of capitalism, 4 May 1890, takes her place between Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Copenhagen as a great centre of the social revolution - a centre nonetheless important in the future because the workers are now trying their strength against their slavedrivers in peaceful combination".⁴

Although Glasgow was a much more proletarian city than middle-class Edinburgh, May Day was not celebrated in 'the second city of the (British) Empire' in 1890. In Glasgow the SDF was weak and at a low ebb in 1890; and in his 'Glasgow Notes' in *Justice*, the organ of the SDF, James Smith focussed on the 10,000 workers who were unemployed. When he stressed that the economic 'outlook is indeed gloomy in the extreme', he touched on one reason for the Glaswegian socialists' weakness.⁵ What he did not mention was their sectarian refusal to co-operate with other socialists.

In the early 1890s the Scottish workers' movement did not speak about May Day, but about the demonstration for the eight-hour day among the workers of all countries 'in the civilised world'. At the meeting on the East Meadows, Edinburgh, on 4 May 1890, the Scottish Socialist Federation persuaded a thousand workers to vote for a resolution stressing 'the international character of the labour question'.⁶ By contrast, the first celebration of May Day in the other major Scottish city took place on Glasgow Green, 3 May 1891, where a resolution supporting the agitation for an eight-hour day was carried 'with acclamation' amid three cheers for the social revolution'.⁷

But the enigma of why May Day was not celebrated in Glasgow in 1890 cannot be explained away simply by evoking the serious poverty and unemployment of that year. The socialists in the SDF in Glasgow were, though functioning in harsh and difficult circumstances, imprisoned in their own self-imposed sectarianism. This was probably a major reason for their failure to get May Day celebrated in 1890. A clue to this unconcealed sectarianism regarding May Day was seen in their criticism of the Edinburgh Trades Council's refusal to support a May Day demonstration at all in 1891, though 'the Scottish Socialist Federation proposed to hold the pageant on 3 May instead of Labour Day'.⁸

The conflict within the Edinburgh Trades Council survived until at least 1896. There was a dispute between the 'old' trade unionists and the 'new' and largely socialist trade unionists about whether workers were being asked to support an international Labour Day or May Day as a symbol of Labour's struggle against Capital. As a report in the *Labour Chronicle*, 1 June 1896, put it:

"There can be no doubt, too, that many of the old school of trades unionists look with some degree of suspicion on these demonstrations,

having begun to notice that their bent is towards socialism'.⁹ Although the conflict between the 'old' trade unionists whose allegiance was to the Liberal Party rather than the Scottish Socialist Federation or the Independent Labour Party the socialist and the 'new trade unionists' more internationalist outlook fostered socialist sentiments and assisted their orientation towards the Left.

But, although Glasgow has attracted more attention from labour historians than the capital city of Edinburgh, May Day was celebrated in Edinburgh on 1 May, 1896 'rather than on the first Saturday in May'. As the Labour Chronicle explained:

"The Trades Council having decided to take no part in any labour demonstration this year, the Scottish Socialist Federation and the Independent Labour Party determined to make a start with a really socialist demonstration, and on the day when the socialist workers in every land celebrated the festival of Labour". Between eight hundred and a thousand workers - "rough, unlettered working men" - voted for resolutions supporting the agitation for a legal eight-hour day and against war and militarism.¹⁰

As a postscript, it should be added that the real, tangible radicalisation of the Scottish, and especially the Glaswegian, working class 'exploded' during the First World War. In spite of the work of those British 'revisionist' historians who have sought to play down the extent and significance of the Red Clyde, the celebration of May Day by thousands and thousands of men and women was an index to the growth of socialist consciousness.

When the big breakthrough came in 1917 in the wake of the Clydesiders' support for Zimmerwald and the first Russian revolution, there were now sixteen platforms with representatives from 230 socialist organisations on Glasgow Green. Indeed, an estimated 100,000 people took part in the actual march through the streets in 1917. Then, in May 1918 and in the midst of a brutal and bloody war, thousands and thousands of Glaswegian workers struck work on 1 May to celebrate the solidarity and dignity of labour.¹¹

An exceptionally proletarianised area, Glasgow was destined to be a major catalyst of socialist change in Scotland. In mobilizing the Irish immigrants in Scotland behind the Labour Party, the way was opened up for the advent of the first 'minority' Labour Government in 1924.

But 1918 was a significant landmark in the growth of the celebration of May Day in the Celtic countries of 'Great Britain'. In Dublin as in Glasgow, working people celebrated May Day on 1 May for the first time on any scale. As Cathal O'Shannon, the editor of Irish Opinion, put it: "The Glasgow workers, like those in Dublin, decided to hold May Day this year on 1 May, and not the first Sunday. Glasgow and Dublin are the two cities in these countries that lead the van in the militant army of Labour, and from them, if from nowhere else, we may expect a bold lead."

Footnotes

1. James D. Young, "Socialism Since 1889: A Biographical History", (London, 1988)
2. Julius Braunthal, "History of the International, 1865-1914 (London 1966), p.246
3. David Lowe, "Souvenirs of Scottish Labour", (Glasgow 1919), p.34
4. H.M. Hyndman, "The Fourth of May Demonstration", Justice, 3 May 1890.
5. James Smith, "Glasgow Notes", *ibid*, 10 May 1890.
6. "Edinburgh Socialists and the Eight-Hour Day", *ibid*, 10 May 1890.
7. "Glasgow", *ibid.*, 16 May 1891.
8. "Scottish Labour Notes", *ibid.*, 24 May 1891.
9. "Labour Chronicle", 1 May 1895.
10. "May Day Celebration in Edinburgh", *ibid.*, 1 June 1896.
11. "Glasgow Herald", 2 May 1918.
12. "Labour Day", Irish Opinion, 30 May 1918.

Ideas are not as fragile as men. They cannot be made to drink hemlock.

Cleon in Thucydides

An invitation from the glorious city of Budapest to write about the celebration of May Day during the world crossroads-crisis year of 1990 was a great honour. Just as political crisis and economic turmoil were very important in 1919, when the name of John Maclean, the great Clydeside socialist, linked the cities of Budapest and Glasgow in the struggles of working people for justice and democracy, so similar trends linking other cities in an unofficial spiritual international of visionaries are visible today. And Budapest and Glasgow have always had visionary intellectuals in their midst.

The key to everything that is happening in Scotland in 1990 is the very, very serious economic crisis. Although the Scottish workers' movement is still alive and kicking against the tyranny-creating 'free market' forces of today, trade unions are losing members as the process of de-industrialisation continues unchallenged in any significant way by the Labour Party. And yet despite soul-destroying unemployment, massive poverty and increasing ill-health in many communities, the never forgotten tradition of celebrating May day has been revived.

On 1 May, 1990, a group of between three and four hundred men and women, workers and intellectuals, carried a banner through the East End of Glasgow. In attempting to make links between the hundred-year past of Scottish working people's struggles against militarism, unemployment, poor health and inadequate education, an uncertain future and the present, the brightly coloured banner with the words, "From Chicago to Glasgow: 100 Years of May Day", evoked the past to conjure up an image of a future in which the May Day celebrations would be at the heart of the existence of working people.

A small unofficial celebration of 1 May 1990, in what was once 'the second city of the (British) Empire' is instructive. In harking back to one hundred years of May Day as a symbolic day of workers' solidarity internationally as well as at home, the small amorphous group built around the book, *Workers' City*, are committed to the socialist dream of a world free of poverty, ill-health, ignorance, obscurantism and militarism. This celebration is important in a wider context in which Scots are engaged in soul-searching about their own nation's past.

Although numerically small, May Day gatherings in the cities of Glas-

gow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh and in some of the smaller towns such as Stirling and Kilmarnock, they were not reported in the daily or weekly newspapers. As meetings took place to celebrate May Day in recent years have attracted fewer and fewer people as the official trade union leaders have lost touch with the grassroots, together with the repression stimulated by Mrs Thatcher, the Scottish workers' movement is being born again outside the official movement.

The biggest May Day celebration in Scotland in 1990 was held in Glasgow. Organised by the official labour movement, it had to give more emphasis than in the past to the Scottish national question. Alongside this official celebration on Sunday, 7th May, on the famous Glasgow Green, where May Day was first celebrated almost a hundred years ago, an unofficial platform gave hospitality to socialists. ¹

In Britain as a whole the economic crisis is really putting socialism back on the agenda. In an article in the Times, the organ of the British Establishment, it is reported that 'Thatcher rules, but still people want socialism'. ² By contrast, the Scots are much more disaffected from the British Establishment than the English or the Welsh.

This is the background against which the Scottish Trades Union Congress organised an international day of workers' solidarity in July 1990. In coming out of the celebrations leading up to May Day last year, the 14th July, 1990, was set aside as A Day For Scotland. A protest against 'every piece of undemocratic legislation from the Poll Tax (a tax redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich) to cuts in the National Health Service', this celebration of life against English Toryism is a historic turning-point. ³

In attracting 25,000 to Stirling on 14 July, the Scottish Trades Union Congress is responding at least partly to the unofficial celebration of internationalism on 1 May 1990, for the first time since 1923, as A Day For Scotland. Though A Day For Scotland attracted much attention from the newspapers, it was the culmination of earlier struggles for justice and national dignity. Backed up by pop bands, the participants were agitating for a Scottish Parliament and socialist policies. ⁴

At the heart of the revival of the May Day celebrations in Scotland spilling over into July and August is the economic crisis. Although Pat Kane, a left wing pop band leader, is right to say that 'the 1980s saw a flourishing of proletarian and socialist images of Scotland' with 'the experiences of the urban working class' being a major part of this voicing of Scotland', the role of the Labour Party in Scotland in accepting Thatcherite economics has been crucial in triggering off mass discontent. ⁵

In Glasgow the Labour administration has adopted Thatcherite economics. As part of their strategy of economic regeneration, they have attempted to give the famous Glasgow Green to money-obsessed redevelopers. In circumstances where economic scarcity is bringing democratic

processes to the edge of extinction, the May Day celebrations are being increasingly seen as an index to what the democratic Left now requires to do to counter the inherently undemocratic ideology of the 'free market' forces which allow, in the idiom of George Bernard Shaw, 'the rich and the poor alike to sleep under London Bridge'.

Despite the much talked about 'death of socialism' in British newspapers, the democratic Left in Scotland is now attracting mass support for humane policies to deal with the economic crisis. At the moment thousands of oil workers engaged on the off-shore oil industry are on strike against the big multinational oil companies to demand proper safety conditions in a crisis and accident prone industry. The oil workers in the North Sea of Scotland are now gaining considerable support from the official trade union leaders, other workers on shore, the media and 'public opinion'. Much of their success is due to the ongoing soul-searching in Scotland including a re-assessment of the significance of May Day in our national history and the history of other countries. Alongside a born-again capitalism and the alleged 'death of socialism', the forces of a socialist renaissance are becoming increasingly vocal and confident.

1. 'Defend the People's Culture', The Glasgow Keelie, July 1990.
2. Robin Oakley, 'Thatcher rules, but still people want socialism', The Times, 4 July 1990.
3. 'A Day For Scotland', Radical Scotland, June/July 1990.
4. 'No looking back as young celebrate power', Observer Scotland, 15 July 1990.
5. Pat Kane, 'A Day For Scotland', Radical Scotland, August/September, 1990.

Alongside the massive de-industrialisation now underway in America and Western Europe, the restructuring of the transnational capitalist economy stirs up new class struggles between the privileged and the unprivileged. This process is also stimulating socialists to rediscover something of their own history. And as the torch of unenlightened capitalist "enlightenment" passes from Glasgow towards the end of this year, the Glaswegian socialists' role within this event will be to assist the Left in Ireland to reconstruct the memory of Glasgow's Dublin connection and vice versa. At the heart of any progressive definition of culture is the deposit of the most precious part of the accumulated cultural treasures of the past - that is, the *consciousness* of men and women themselves. The new capitalism of the late-twentieth century is unwittingly contributing to the rediscovery of Glasgow's Dublin connection. With the revival of the memory of Glasgow and Dublin as workers' cities *par excellence*, left-wing Scottish poets and novelists are crafting new prose-poems about the continuity of workers' creativity.

The *No Mean City* of no mean socialist educators and agitators has always had an internationalist outlook. In fostering an oppositional, anti-capitalist culture from the nineteenth century, the negative image of the no mean city of the disaffected was developed against the unenlightened Scottish Enlightenment. In any case, the slave trade and slavery were the economic basis of Glasgow's Enlightenment from the late eighteenth century into the next century.

Crammed between Paris in 1989 and Dublin in 1991, Glasgow - at present the city of European capitalist "culture" - had important historic links with both of those cities of European workers' culture for more than a century.

Over a hundred years ago refugees from the bloody and brutal repression of the Paris Commune sought political asylum in the poor but generous communities of the workers' Glasgow. Inside working-class Glasgow the refugees from the workers' Commune in Paris made their own contribution to the cumulative growth of socialist ideas and attitudes. At the same time, they were joined by French glassblowers whose distinctive ideas about capitalist injustice were well received in the workers' Glasgow.

But the links between the workers' Glasgow and Dublin owed a great deal to James Larkin, James Connolly, John Maclean, Harry McShane and many others. As early as the 1850s, the voice of disaffected Irish labour

found expression in and through the genius of the poet-pedlar James McFarlan. In his great poem *The Lords of Labour*, and in his essays on judges and police courts, he spoke up in defence of the workers' Glasgow.

Then the same discontent of the Irish in Glasgow was expressed in the early nineteenth century by the talented Irish novelist Patrick MacGill. Working alongside "the great John Maclean" in the Social Democratic Federation, MacGill articulated the growing disaffection of the working-class Irish in Glasgow. Although the Irish immigrants in Glasgow were marginalised economically, they kept their cultural identity. This was at the heart of the Glaswegian Left's Dublin connection then and later on, too.

When Glasgow municipal socialism (sic!) was allegedly the envy of the world, according to the city's bourgeoisie, Glaswegian workers suffered from appalling poverty, malnutrition, ill-health and unemployment. Even so, they always tried to assist others who were sometimes worse off than themselves. During the "Labour War" in Dublin in 1913, the workers of Glasgow collected and sent donations - the workers' pennies - to the poor and exploited just over the sea. In the left wing nationalist newspaper, *Irish Opinion*, the editor, Cathal O'Shannon, in the seminal year of 1918 wrote: "The Glasgow workers, like those in Dublin, decided to hold May Day this year on the 1st May, and not the first Sunday. Glasgow and Dublin are the two cities in these countries that lead the van in the militant army of Labour and from them, if from nowhere else, we may expect a bold lead".

An awareness of Glasgow labour's historical links with socialist Paris and the workers' Dublin is not of mere academic interest. It is part of what should be the collective memory of, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, "our enslaved ancestors". Far from fostering any awareness of those links the so-called Labour administration in Glasgow under Pat Lally are attempting to develop severe amnesia about the real history of the no mean socialist city of Glasgow. The Labour Party's almost touching support for Thatcherite economic doctrine compels them to repackage Glaswegian workers' collective memory of past struggles against poverty and unemployment.

But although Glaswegians need a collective memory of Glasgow's real Glasgow, they should also remember the continuity of Liberal-Labourism (Lib-Labism) between then and now. Far too often in the past as now so-called Labour men and women have done the bosses' dirty work. Working people need to develop a new pride of where they came from as well as why they are resisting Labour-cum-Tory measures in the interests of the privileged.

A useable past - a meaningful, relevant Labour history - means that the values of authentic socialism need to be fought for and fostered, so that the majority of people can make decisions for fundamental change designed to make the present the past. Therefore labour history museums should not

serve as monuments or mausoleums. they should become resource centres to equip those who are struggling to eradicate unemployment, elitist education, poor housing and poverty. And any city aspiring to become a true city of culture should join in the struggle for democratic socialism from below from Paris to Glasgow and Dublin and beyond.

But what is essential to connect the historic links between Glasgow's Dublin-like workers' struggles with ongoing struggles everywhere in the here-and-now is collective memory. The spectre of the memory of the working class is what really worries the ruling classes here, there and everywhere. In a perceptive discussion of the role of historical memory and the struggles for justice throughout the world, the American radical, Meridel Le Sueur, argues that: "Many remember everything ... the ruling class is finding that out now ... you have to differentiate the class memory of the bourgeoisie who dismember memory instead of remembering it ... it is their class weapon ... and because of the crisis of capitalism is repeated and grown into a monstrous evil the memory of struggle returns to all".

In Paris, Glasgow, Dublin, New York, Warsaw and Johannesburg historical consciousness of the real past of humankind is being rediscovered. It is vital to the survival of civilisation itself. A low level of historical consciousness is, in fact, an indispensable part of ruling class control over working people. The restoration of Glasgow's Dublin connection - an important part of the Western socialist heritage - will contribute to the eventual eradication of exploitation and injustice, not the "heritage industry" or "the end of history" being fostered by the Tories and their cohorts elsewhere.

- Donald Anderson**
Teaches Modern Studies and History at a Secondary school in Glasgow. Active in the Scottish Republican Movement for many years.
- Freddy Anderson**
Originally from Monaghan, now a well-established Glasgow poet and novelist. Currently writing a book of short stories.
- Norman Bissell**
A teacher, formerly Strathclyde EIS Convener, he is active in his union at both local and national level. Secretary of the Scottish Federation of Socialist Teachers since its inception in 1986. Helped found Open World Poetics in 1989 - a group which discusses poetic, ecological, scientific, political and philosophical issues and connections between them.
- John Taylor Caldwell**
Born 1911 in Glasgow. Author of *Come Dungeons Dark*, the biography of Guy Aldred with whom he worked for 27 years. Is currently at work on his own autobiography.
- Ned Donaldson**
Born Glasgow 1927. Has recently retired from his trade as bricklayer but continues active in the left-wing movement. He and his friend Les Forster are currently writing a fuller account of the Merrylee Campaign.
- Michael Donnelly**
Assistant curator at People's Palace till his dismissal in October 1989 for publishing an article in the *Glasgow Herald* daring to criticise District Council leader Pat Lally and museums director Julian Spalding. Plans to take his case to Industrial Tribunal.
- William Giffedder**
Born Glasgow 1945, left school at fifteen. Various jobs. Poems published in *Scottish Review*, the *Glasgow Magazine*, and *New Writing Scotland* vol 5, 6, 7, 8.
- Alasdair Gray**
Originally a painter and playwright, becoming better known for his prose fiction.
- James Kelman**
Author of novels and short stories. Has recently completed a new collection of the latter.
- Robert Lynn**
Born Calton, Glasgow, 1924. After his apprenticeship in Yarrow's he joined the merchant service and sailed as an engineer officer. An anarchist from the age of twenty, and a firm believer in the supreme efficacy of direct action in the fight against oppression.
- J.E. MacInnes**
Winner of the Scotia Bar Writers' Prize for her short story *Meadowsweet*. She is the Regional Councillor for Alness in Ross-shire.
- Ian McKechnie**
Born in Anderston, Glasgow, 1938. Left wing activist over many years. His poems have appeared in magazines and anthologies.
- Brendan McLaughlin**
Worked as a telephone engineer before going to Strathclyde University in 1978. He writes stories and songs. Edited the anthology *A Spiel Among Us* (Mainstream 1990).
- Farquhar McLay**
Born in the Gorbals, 1934. Has published widely, mainly in magazines.
- Jack Withers**
Has written for theatre, TV and radio. His poems can be found in many magazines including *Lines Review*, *Chapman*, *Radical Scotland*. A collection of his poetry and prose, *Glasgow Limbo* was published by Clydeside Press in September 1990.
- J.N. Reilly**
Born Glasgow 1957. His work has appeared in many magazines and anthologies including *Workers' City* and *A Spiel Among Us* where his prize-winning story *On a Hot June Day* was published. He is the author of numerous books and a 3-vol translation of Rimbaud's complete works.
- Hugh Savage**
A plumber by trade, he has been active in the working-class movement most of his life. He is presently Chairman of the Friends of the People's Palace.
- Jeff Torrington**
Was born in the Gorbals in 1935. *Swing Hammer Swing* has been excerpted from his nearly-completed novel of the same name.
- James D. Young**
Is Reader in History at the University of Stirling. A prolific writer who contributes regularly to the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Irish Post* and the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, he was recently described at a university conference as a "culturalist". He is sympathetic to all those workers and intellectuals who put "the intellectual heid" on those who defend the morally bankrupt system of late twentieth-century capitalism.

After the Jamboree: THE RECKONING.

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Edited by Farquhar McLay

with

Donald Anderson * Freddy Anderson * Norman Bissell *
John Taylor Caldwell * Ned Donaldson * Michael Donnelly
* William Gilfedder * Alasdair Gray * James Kelman *
Robert Lynn * J.E. MacInness * Ian McKechnie
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